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# ON THE ANVIL

L. I. CRAWFORD

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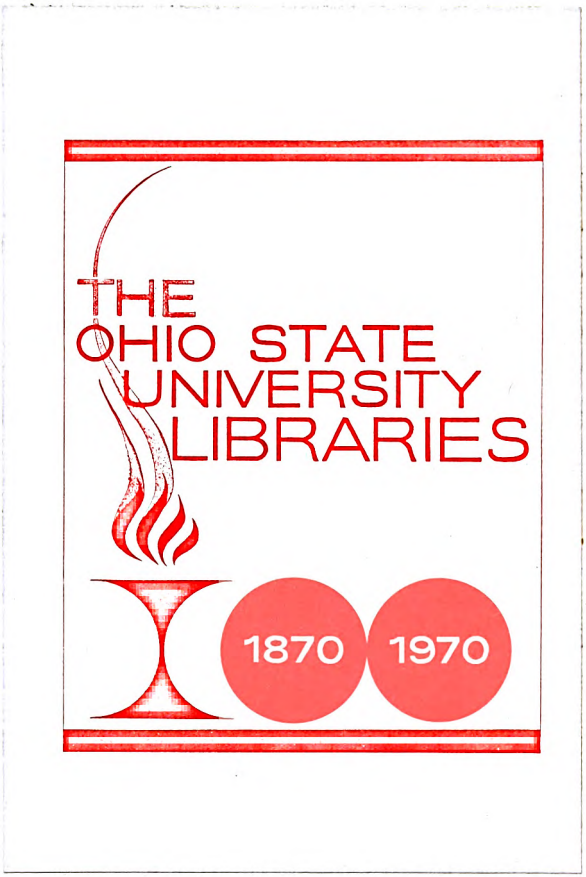


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L. I. CRAWFORD

WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY
NEW YORK 1929

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## CHAPTER I

### *THE GOLDEN AGE*

SHE was enormously fat. She weighed two hundred and fifty pounds at least, a matter not very surprising to any one who saw her eat. The way, if short, was steep, and though she strove to combat the heat of the day by the slowness of her pace, the sun triumphed and she puffed and panted. At the foot of the street of the British Hospital—*La Calle del Hospital Britanico*—she paused and mopped her brow. Celedon, the baker, came to the door of his shop. "Hot, no?" he remarked.

"Dreadful!" agreed Ana the nurse, blowing out her cheeks.

"What a rare machine!"

They both contemplated the rare machine, which was nothing more nor less than a perambulator, one of the very first to be seen in those parts. Tim Staveley's English father had obtained it; a man of strong ideas regarding hygiene, he condemned as unhealthy the usual lot of infancy in Valparaiso, which was to lie on the knees of a fat nurse while she sat in the gutter gossiping, with one eye cocked in case her mistress should be coming. The perambulator offended the professional feelings of Ana the nurse. "It is a barbarity," she observed. "But all foreigners are mad."

The baker nodded sympathetically, and peeped in at Tim Staveley—a wisp of dark hair, and a little face puckered in sleep and half hidden by the coverlet. "A refined child," he remarked. (He knew whose it was, as everybody in Chile knows the affairs of every one else.) "This is his first time out, no?"

"The first time," replied Ana. "He is three weeks old. Now I must go on. The mistress is waiting for me at



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the house of the General, and worse than that, her mother. There is a veteran, I tell you! Until soon, no?"

"Until very soon, miss," said the baker with civility. (She had been married two or three times, and was nearly seventy, but in Chile every woman is presumed to be innocent of matrimony unless she is actually known to be guilty.)

. . . . . .

The nurse went heavily upon her way up the Street of the British Hospital, which was paved with diabolical saw-edged flints set side by side, excessively trying to the feet. About a hundred yards up the narrow street she came to the long one-storied *façade* of a house in the comfortable widespread Spanish colonial style—of tile-crowned *adobe,* with blank shuttered windows facing the street (each room had inner windows less destructive to privacy which gave on the *patio,* so that the outer ones were never used). At the great double door the nurse pressed a button which seemed rather out of place there, and soon a little shutter or nun's hole was opened, and the grizzled head of the *mayordomo* appeared. "Open then, Primitivo," said Ana impatiently. "Here you see me, half dead with the heat." The *mayordomo* ejaculated recognition, and hastened to open the smaller door set in the portal; then, as that would not accommodate the baby carriage, flung back half of the great door itself. He clucked to the sleeping child, and Ana passed on into the *patio,* a sunny quadrangle set with arabesques of box round a well-grown palm, and surrounded on all four sides by a veranda of warm red brick, on to which all the rooms of the house opened.

Chilian women of the lower classes, denied any other mental outlet, have a scent for a novelty that borders on the uncanny. The perambulator was not halfway across the *patio* before Clarissa and Teresa, the two housemaids, and Candelaria the sewing-woman, were out of the house and beside it, with Francisca the cook, whose bulk rivaled Ana's own, hurrying from the kitchen wing

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as fast as possible to join in. The four women gathered round the sleeping Tim, and expressed their kindly interest, after the fashion of their kind, by screaming all together like sea-gulls; whereupon Tim woke up, was at once appalled by these grinning brown faces, and burst into roars of panic. "Now you have done it!" said Ana. "*She* will hear you now."

The quartette looked guilty. "Shall I get a bit of onion from the kitchen?" suggested the cook. "There is nothing like that for soothing a *guaguita.*"

"Or the littlest sip of *vino tinto?*" said Teresa.

Ana smiled in a superior way. "You know nothing about nursing *gringo* children, that is plain to see," she observed. "The mamma would be very angry if we did such a thing—the *gringos* have such mad ideas about what is bad for children. *Caramba!* Here comes the Señora!"

A stout middle-aged lady, wrapped in a great long-fringed shawl of black silk a hundred years old, with the raven hair and dead ivory complexion of Spanish blood, swung briskly into the *patio* and bore down on the women like a full-rigged line of battleships on a group of frigates. As she advanced she delivered broadside after broadside of voluble invective, and the maids scattered in disorder. Only Ana stood her ground, soothing her charge, with an uneasy eye on Tim's indignant grandmother. The latter, however, wasted no time on her. "Come!" she said brusquely, and led the way under the arch on the other side of the *patio* into the terraced garden of the house. The topmost of the terraces, under the windows, was flanked by a low balustrade and an irregular hedge of geraniums six feet high, of the kind that are called Cardinals, and it commanded a wonderful view, even for that hilly country of endless fine prospects. Looking downhill between the dropping crimson globes the eye saw first the lush greenery of the garden's lower terraces, then the high tile-crowned wall which cut off the foreground; far below were the red roofs of the town, and the tumbling

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blue of Valparaiso Bay. Beyond this again rose the land, in tier upon tier of dun and distant purple, culminating in the white indented sky-line of the Andes, a hundred miles away.

Tim's grandmother, however, disregarded the beauties of nature, and advanced steadily to the end of the terrace, where her daughter, Mrs. Staveley—whom her German father, the General Hardt von Schulenberg, called Gretchen, her Chilian mother Margarita, and her English husband Peg—sat in a chair, pretty but pale from the recent experience of bringing Tim into the world. "Here!" said the Señora abruptly.

Tim's mother rose from her seat, and superintended the placing of the baby carriage beneath a pergola of vines, so that the blazing sun should not try the eyes of the child. "That will do, Ana," she remarked. "Come in time to take him back before *almuerzo*."

The old nurse waddled off. Usually her charges remained on her knees while daylight lasted; there was, she mused, something to be said for the mad foreign *coche* after all. . . .

"This is much better than our own little house," said Mrs. Staveley to her mother across the perambulator. "It is a nuisance to have no garden."

"*Claro*," replied the older lady. "I have always said that you and Charles ought to come and live with us, like Max and his wife."

"Oh, Charles would never agree to that. He has the English idea that one ought to have a house of one's own. But I will bring baby every day. Look! He likes it."

The baby held out his tiny hands to the shifting shadows of the vine-leaves, and crowed ecstatically.

. . . . . .

In after years Tim Staveley was unable entirely to abandon the notion that he remembered his extreme infancy personally, impossible though it was. He saw two younger cousins go through a precisely similar period, and as he grew older he came to know every inch of his

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grandfather's great garden, round which his first years centered, down to the very texture of the soil, so that his mind refused to define where recollection began. At the age of two, however, he fell off the highest terrace into the midst of a prickly pear on the middle one, and there was no mistaking that.

His early memories were mainly sunlit. Childhood's recollections mostly are, no doubt, but in this case they could hardly be otherwise, for in point of climate Valparaiso is a favored place. In the summer, the same bright day dawns inevitably upon the same cream-edged blue sea for months on end, and the people never know what it is to cancel any out-of-door pursuit because of rain. It is true that in the short mild winter, innocent of frost and snow, which merely makes the roses fresher and more delicate, there is rain that is rain indeed. The heavens seem to open, and the high hills behind the port collect the deluge and discharge it in roaring freshets upon the town. If the gutters are blocked, or the great drains constructed beneath the streets to meet this special emergency, furniture gets spoilt and pavements burst. But on such days the children stayed within doors, with the nursery windows a blur of rain, and half an hour after the storm's ceasing the garden would be as sunlit as before.

To Tim Staveley the man, the garden, that haunt of Tim the child, had a warmth of blossom-gemmed graciousness quite beyond the power of words to reproduce, for only the affection of the thinker can give one's thoughts quite that tinge of *couleur de rose*. But even to the eye of a stranger it must have been a very gorgeous garden, in which the charm of the Old World was united with the lavishness of the tropics. In it there were foxgloves and honeysuckle and hibiscus, morning glory and love-in-a-mist, giant sunflowers and bougainvillea; daffodils, primroses, lavender and lupins; banana plant, violets and hollyhocks; maidenhair fern, and the gigantic tree-fern from Robinson Crusoe's Island. Geraniums grew particularly,

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well in that sub-tropical soil, becoming great bushes with woody stems, and there was a species of daisy-tree, flowering in a yard-wide bunch of white and gold. Then there were fuchsia bushes—indigenous these—and every sort of rose; while the big white calla lilies grew in swathes and splashes of cream and orange.

The two upper terraces were devoted to flowers, and the bottom one, stretching to the high wall bounding the property, was the kitchen garden and orchard. There old Manuel, the gardener, would pick his hundred tomatoes a day from plants sagging with the crop; there, too, were the gigantic pumpkins, over-heavy for a child to lift, which gave such a color to the story of Cinderella; and the tangled melon-plants with their little cricket-balls of fruit, which had to be sniffed at every morning to see whether they were ripe. Down the three terraces went a flight of stone steps, which was protected from the sun by a *parron* or pergola of vines, heavy in season with bunches of grapes like those that the scouts brought back from the Land of Canaan, in the General's old German Bible.

The boundary wall was too high for a direct view of the road—the *Camino Cintura,* or Girdle Road—but from the top terrace one could see the turn it made at the ravine a little further on. The foreign merchants and their clerks used to ride along there before breakfast, and the tops of their heads would bob along the line of the wall like corks in a stream. Tim's infantile mind confused this with the described procedure of drowning, and he used to get quite anxious if the riders failed to reappear for the third time; but his solicitude was not very practical, for if any rider took a toss at the horseshoe turn, which not uncommonly occurred, he considered it to be his lucky day.

Except for one awful occasion when Ana forgot to apply the brakes, and he was found with two wheels suspended over an abyss, nothing occurred to disturb the even tenor of Tim's cradlehood. The ailments of infancy passed him by, and at twenty months he had found his

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feet, and his place upon the terrace had been taken by the little Gretchen, his cousin Margarethe. After that he was strictly relegated to the lower terrace, where there were no steps for him to fall down; and there he found Romance, and a vast world peopled by his larger cousins and filled with thickets of undergrowth too high to see over, in which dwelt toads, and hairy spiders as big as a mouse, horrible-looking but harmless, and two beautiful red-eyed birds called *quiltehues,* who walked on stilt-like legs, lived upon grubs, and uttered discordant cries of rage when chased by valiant two-year-olds.

It was a great time for a little boy, growing up insensibly to the mastery of three languages, and a triple inheritance of all that interests the growing mind of childhood before reality comes along to spoil everything. Tim's whimsical English father, with his books and fascinating collecting bottles for beetles and butterflies, was quite naturally the center of his universe; no one could equal his gift for romancing, and his tenacious brain held a surprising store of satisfactory fairy folk—those wholesome English fairies who seem to tread forever upon buttercups in green meadows. But the General, his grandfather, possessed a red-backed volume by a magician called Grimm, which housed a kingdom of pointed roofs, steeple-crowned hats, trolls, witches and ogres, best described in good mouth-filling German. And then, too, there were the resources of the country. What can equal in attraction the tale of El Raton Perez y La Hormiguita —the Rat and the Ant? There is a sublime pointlessness about this exciting narrative which never fails to appeal to the young. Also, in spite of all suppression from authority, there were other and less innocuous stories recounted by the domestic staff, having a strong flavor of Indian great grandmammas about them, and going back, as Tim afterwards realized, to long before the imposition of the Spanish veneer upon the Araucanian. In these tales, half-forgotten tribal demons peered out of the dusk, and old women *eyed* the passer-by, and other and more

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beneficent old women healed ailments with snake-skins and the blood of calves. There was a particularly malevolent hobgoblin called the *mandingui,* who took the form of a fuzzy black cat and played all sorts of tricks. According to our modern ideas, these stories should have given Tim inhibitions, complexes, and goodness knows what, but, so far as may be seen, they never gave him anything but a not unpleasant thrill.

When he grew to boyhood and learnt to read, and got his first pony, the garden became the scene of explorations up the Amazon, trips to the North Pole, and endless military exploits, for the children had not seen their grandfather's medals and case of presentation swords for nothing. The system of sluices by which, every evening, the beds and orchards were irrigated, releasing a fine thirsty perfume from the baked earth, also received due attention, and became moats, mill-races, burst dams, and Panama Canals.

That garden was, for the first few years of his life, virtually the whole world as Tim knew it—a kindly world, populated first and foremost, of course, by his relatives, and then by such lesser lights as Manuel, the gardener, a genial earthy man with green strips of *pita* for tying up things always hanging out of his pockets; and Francisca the cook, endlessly preparing vegetables outside the kitchen archway, and singing a song about *"Los hombres, ay, los hombres"* and their wicked ways. Vaguer figures came and went; the bottle-man over the wall, with his doleful: *"Botellas? Hay bote-Llas?"*; the *huasos* galloping along the *Camino Cintura,* their vivid *ponchos* flapping from their shoulders. . . .

It seemed as complete, as satisfactory, and as solid as the hills to little Tim Staveley.

. . . . . .

In truth, it did not seem very different to his grandfather, the General Hans Hardt von Schulenberg, when he wakened up in his chair on the top terrace from an after-

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lunch nap one sunny day in the October of 1900, shortly after Tim's third birthday.

The General's first thought, as he opened his eyes and saw the dark head of his English grandchild down below in the garden, was that Max's hair had somehow changed color; then he became fully awake, and smiled at his own absurdity. Old age coming on, he supposed; though he scarcely felt older now, at sixty-three, than he had done when his son Max really was Tim's age, in—what year now?—in 'sixty-seven. The General shifted his heavy square-drilled body, in its blue Chilian uniform with the gold epaulettes, propped up his spurred feet comfortably on the low parapet of the terrace, lit a cigar, and surrendered himself comfortably to this reminiscent vein. . . .

A lot had happened since 1867, when Max was three. That was the year after Königgratz; he was a captain of Uhlans then, getting slowly better from that saber-cut across the head (his hand went up to the scar in his thick white hair) and wondering if he would ever be able to fight again—a man became a veteran quickly in the Prussian army of the 'sixties. Well, that Austrian gunner at Königgratz—how plainly he remembered the man's coarse peasant features and glazing eyes, as the life was choked out of him—had not done so badly for him, in spite of that grievous slash; it was to that escapade that he owed his appointment to the Crown Prince's staff in 1870—His Highness had seen it from afar, and possessed a royal memory—and that had brought him his colonelcy, his Order of the Black Eagle, and all the rest of it. They had needed the promotion badly enough too, with the other baby—Margarethe, Tim's mother—born the week before Sedan, and he with nothing but his pay, a seventh son of impoverished Schloss Schulenberg; his wife no richer, the beautiful daughter of a South American gentleman of small fortune, Don Pedro Mirales, Chilian Envoy to the Court of Prussia when the young Lieutenant Hardt von Schulenberg had been stationed in Berlin, before the

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Schleswig-Holstein campaign. *Himmel!* What troubles he had had with the family over his marriage! The General smiled to think how trivial it all seemed at this distance. Poignant enough then! That ugly widowed countess with the long nose whom they had wished him to marry for her money—he could not even recall her name now, but he remembered what a blasphemy she had seemed against the thought of Ines' slim, dark beauty. The sound of his wife's voice came to the General from the kitchen wing, and she walked energetically out and descended the garden steps to rate Manuel, who flinched from her coming. It struck the General, as he followed her bustling figure with his eye, that now she could hardly be described as slim. But he had not noticed the gradual change; did not mind it now. She was still Ines. . . .

And in the end, she had become richer than the countess. But that was in '72, when her father died and she came into the enormous fortune which the discovery of silver on his Copiapo lands, in '68, had brought Don Pedro.

How one thing did lead to another! It was the necessity for seeing to his wife's Chilian estate—she had not visited her native country for fifteen years—that had led him to accept a post as instructor on the German military mission to the Chilian army, in the year '77—that, combined with his own increasing distaste for idle garrison life in Germany. He had come out for three years, and now he had been in Chile, almost without a break, for twenty-three. One took what seemed a small decision, and before one knew it took command of one's self. First there had been the War of the Pacific in 1879, which had lasted, one way or another, until 1883—and no man keen on his profession would have turned his back on that. Then he had renewed his instructional contract until 1889, so as to assist in the remodeling of the Chilian army in the light of the war lessons—fascinating work. And then, just as his contract was over, Max, who had returned from Heidelberg in 1883, and was now occupying himself with a commission in the Chilian Regiment of Cuiras-

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siers—the Coraceros—had fallen in love with Olga Roepke, daughter of old Karl Roepke, of Roepke, Brandeis & Co., Hamburg & Valparaiso. The General had countenanced the match—could not have endured having to hurt his son and the charming girl whom he wanted to marry; but it did rather complicate things with regard to a return to Germany, for Olga was not well born, and Max would have had a poor time of it amongst his aristocratic cousins at Schulenberg as the son-in-law of a Hamburg merchant. The General was no snob, but he was practical. So they drifted comfortably along, always talking about a return to Germany on a morrow which never arrived, contenting themselves with a mere holiday in the Fatherland, on which Max and Olga did not come, for in 1890 this first little son—little Kurt Axel—was born, and of course they could not be on the move for that; and, equally of course, the doting grandparents had to come back to Chile to see the new arrival.

Their plans were still indefinite when the revolution against President Balmaceda broke out in 1891.

Circumstances—his position as a property-owner, his professional interest in the men he had trained, his many friends amongst the leaders of the revolutionary party—combined to push the General into a prominent part in that civil war, which left him a leading figure in Chilian national life. His days were too full with his duties as a member of the victorious Montt government to think of his own concerns for some time afterwards. In 1893 Friedrich, Max's second boy, was born. In the following year the General's daughter married Charles Lee Staveley, the young English botanist and entomologist, who was then gathering materials for that first book on South American flora and fauna which had established his reputation. . . .

It struck the General, with a tinge of sadness, that now there was no possible return for him, that he must live in Chile for the rest of his days and die there. Max and Olga would find it hard to adapt themselves to German

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life—their *kultur* might be Teutonic, but they were used to the easier social customs of South America; Max, moreover, was very properly interested in his regiment. Ines was in her own setting here; Staveley was still working on flowers and butterflies, it was his life-work. And in any case, if he returned to anywhere, it would be to England. . . . He himself, Hans Hardt von Schulenberg, would never, he knew in his heart of hearts, settle down to the dull hidebound life of the Junker military caste in the Fatherland; he had grown away from that, which had once been his background, an integral part of his being.

Ah, well! One could not have everything, and there was no land flowing more plenteously with milk and honey, none where the sun shone more brightly, than Chile. The children—his grandchildren—were playing under the flowers in the garden below; the General forgot his memories as he followed their antics. Sweet little things! The soldier of twenty-nine battles rose to his six feet three, threw away the butt of his cigar, and jingled down the steps to the occupation that he liked best in the world —playing with his little people.

. . . . . .

He stopped for a moment on the second terrace to lean over his son-in-law's shoulder and admire the swift deft strokes of his brush. Charles Staveley had a live *avispa*—one of those savage Prussian-blue hornets whose sting can rouse an ox—in a bottle on the little portable table before him, and was making one of those inimitable color drawings which, reproduced in his books, are the joy of entomologists and botanists all the world over. The General looked at the vicious insect, and made a movement of mock terror. "Take care he doesn't get out!" he cautioned.

Tim's father turned his alert, clean-shaven face and smiled. "Rather not; it took enough trouble to catch him," he replied. "But it's always better to paint from the living insect if you can—they lose their colors almost immediately you spiflicate 'em."

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The General went on down the steps. Charles Staveley was not well born either, and here again the German relatives would have been stiff; the General, with the breadth of vision that his many-sided life had brought to him, smiled to think of it. This young man's name was already known to a far wider circle than that which reverenced the Gothic glories of the Schulenbergs, with their robber-baron ancestry and honest but rather dull present generation. And his reputation was growing.

How far it grew everybody knows now. Charles Lee Staveley is dead enough to-day for his gifts to be appreciated, and not so long dead that they have been forgotten. The obituary notice in *The Times* may not be fresh in the public mind, but Professor Foxley's *Life and Works of Charles Lee Staveley* was a notable book, and the memorial at the Botanical Gardens in Regent's Park was the subject of a press controversy which, in the ironical way of life, attracted more general attention than ever the rather specialized merits of the man whom it commemorated succeeded in doing.

In 1900, however, Charles Staveley was still alive, and however much his friends may have believed in him, had himself no idea of ever being famous. Indeed, such is the strong influence of upbringing and inherited prejudice on the most powerful intellect, he was half inclined to look upon himself as a failure. He was not a *savant* either by heredity or environment. His father had been a well-established manufacturer in the Midlands, who had been the son of a blacksmith with an acquisitive bent which had founded a fortune in the iron trade when child labor and the absence of trades unions and foreign competition made it rather easier to do so than it is now. By his relatives Charles Staveley was regarded as a ne'er-do-well, and even to-day a lingering feeling to that effect exists; all Professor Foxley's efforts have not convinced his surviving brother that Charles was not a trifler. Why, the man spent five years writing one book about butterflies! The Staveley idea of a respectable occupation was

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the iron trade. An ambition for the services, now, they could have understood, and even had a sneaking respect for, though they made a great parade of being unassuming downright Staffordshire folks. But that a Staveley should have chosen to mess about with a lot of bug-hunting nonsense. . . . It was as bad as if he had become an artist or an actor, and far worse than if he had taken to drink or beating his children. (The family were religious in a way not often encountered now, and they set things in this order.) The only consolation that they had was that the lost sheep did in time acquire enough distinction in his effeminate pursuit to enable them to carry it off in public: but old Tom, the father, died before this surprising and unexpected alleviation of the disgrace came to pass. He had, of course, washed his hands of his unworthy offspring. "Take your choice, lad," he said on the last occasion on which father and son set eyes on each other. "I've had enough o' this messing around. It's th' works, or you can go to th' devil for owt I care, and not a penny o' mine d'ye touch. I'll have none o' my sons idling 'is time." And Charles replied, in that exasperating sarcastic manner that he had picked up at Oxford: "Thank you, father, I'd rather have the monarch than his kingdom,"—a remark which took his parent several minutes to work out.

So he went away. His mother, who had been a Jenks of Cradley Heath, had "had brass of her own," and Charles had a share of it; old Tom, to his intense rage, could not enforce his status as Tribal Old Man. He never ceased to reproach himself for having given in to his late wife and agreed to send his son to a university, where the children of genuine and honest people lose their downright ideas, and get stuck-up and namby-pamby.

Tim's father, therefore, had broken away entirely from his relations long before the boy came on the scene, and Tim never heard much about them. Mr. Staveley had a naturally derisive twist of speech, and as his family was one of the few things at which he did not feel like poking

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fun, he seldom alluded to it at all. There was a lot of Staffordshire still in Charles, and in spite of having broken away he half sympathized with his family and disapproved of himself; it was not until the later part of his career that this lingering feeling was dispelled. He was never the learned man of fiction in his ways; he was infinitely more alert in manner than his brother Tom in the Filsley foundry, for all that he dealt with butterflies instead of bar iron.

Charles Staveley was now in the middle of his lamentably short career, and had been in Valparaiso for eight years. It formed a convenient center for him in the endless gathering of the material for those great books which have made him famous. At times he would go north as far as Arica, or across the Andes to the steamy Atlantic littoral, being absent for weeks or months and coming back with amazing things in bottles. Once or twice he took short trips to England. It was natural that his son should never have had any idea of his wide reputation until he died; to Tim he was merely an eminently satisfactory father, much more interesting than other people's fathers, who could introduce one to funny beetles and other diverting natural phenomena. . . .

. . . . . .

Mr. Staveley went on limning the diabolical beauty of the *avispa,* all oblivious of coming fame, obituaries and memorials, pausing now and then to listen to the shriek of mirth as toddling three-year-old black-haired Tim was tossed into the air or pursued along the paths by his gigantic grandfather. "Lucky little boy!" he remarked to his wife, who sat beside him knitting.

"I think he enjoys himself, the darling," she agreed. "But why do you remark upon it specially?"

"I was just thinking—contrasting. . . . He's got everything in the world, you know. Look at this garden; what a paradise it is for a child! You should have seen my father's house, and the life we lived there as children. It seems a terribly wicked waste of childhood to look back

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upon—quite inconceivably narrow and stupid. The Sundays! Good heavens! . . . You continental people can have no idea of an English provincial Sunday when I was a boy. We used to sit behind drawn blinds, reading the Bible in the intervals of going to Chapel. The grown-ups all had indigestion. The keynote of piety, as our circle knew it, was gloom. . . . And, of course, there was no real Christianity about it at all; my father sweated his workmen as badly as every one else on Monday morning. I was brought up to regard him as a kind of savage animal who snarled if aggravated. And then, you know, when I grew up, I had all sorts of misery and heartache before I managed to find my proper work. A battle against prejudice and narrow-mindedness—all totally unnecessary."

"Like poor papa," observed his wife. "*His* family wanted him to marry somebody he did not like, for money."

"Exactly. Many people come up against it in some form or other. That's why our little man is so fortunate, for he's dodged all that. Think what we can do for him! We can give him the best of educations—and that doesn't mean the most costly by any means—develop his tastes and inclinations as they come along, and set him on the road of his own choosing. He won't even have to worry about money. If ever a child was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, it's our young man. Look at him chasing that butterfly. When I was an infant of that age I had a God in fusty black clothes waiting to shovel me into hell fire if I ran after butterflies across my parents' flower-beds. Hi, Tim! Come off that!"

"Tim rake it again," replied the child.

"All right, old man. You rake it over."

So they pleasantly built their castles, these parents, in the calm security of their Chilian garden. Incurable optimism of man! No doubt the Day of Judgment will find us mortals still counting our clutches of addled eggs.

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## CHAPTER II

### *CHRISTMAS IN ARCADY*

"MY dear," said the General, fanning himself, "I envy you your power of resisting the heat. We foreigners feel it."

"No worse than I do," retorted the old lady. "It is simply that a man always makes more fuss about things. I think that the heat this year is dreadful."

"And it is not as if we could escape it by going to the country for Christmas," continued the General, watching the effect of his words, "for there it is always hotter."

"Nonsense, Hans! What are you thinking of? At the farm one never feels the heat so much as in town."

"Do you really think so? But in any case, we could not take the whole family down there for Christmas. Think of the bother and trouble."

"Pooh! That is not so much. You men are all so lazy," returned the Señora. "As far as I am concerned —though I know nobody cares what I think—I consider that it would be an excellent plan to go the country for the *fiesta.*"

"Well, if you insist, my dear . . ." said the General, in a reluctant tone, just as if that had not been his intention from the start. Successful so far, he continued his strategic maneuvers. "It will be necessary to send some one ahead to prepare for our coming, *no es cierto?* Perhaps Margarethe would do that. It will be more comfortable for you if she takes the matter out of your hands."

"Oh, indeed!" remarked his wife, bridling. "A pretty muddle she would make of it! I will go as usual; she can come too if she likes."



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The General's eyes twinkled with amused satisfaction. He knew his wife's little weaknesses; approached in any other way, she would have opposed the suggested expedition tooth and nail. She was one of those martyred housewives who insist on sacrificing themselves, whether anybody wants them to or not, and she could make heavy weather of the calmest sea; as her son-in-law put it, her care for her house was such that in the end they would all come to sleeping in the garden, so as to avoid spoiling it. She accomplished the first stage of any journey in a perpetual twitter regarding the servants and their possible orgies when left alone, the keys (which she had usually mislaid), the windows which had been beyond all doubt left open, and the risk of fire; her state of mind was further aggravated by ceaseless gnawing anxiety about the luggage. It was expedient to take these things into account if smooth running were to be achieved.

"Very well, then," agreed the General. "If you will go in advance, we others will come with the children when everything is arranged."

His wife sighed, reveling in her grievance. "I have to do it all, as usual. But I suppose I must put up with it."

The small Tim, sitting on a footstool, listened to this conversation with increasing misgivings; there were certain incongruities in the scheme which his youthful mind refused to entertain. "But," he protested, switching the conversation from Spanish into German, "in the country, how then can we Christmas properly celebrate? Will the *Christkind* come into the country also?" His idea of the festivity was distinctly proprietary and local; Chile as a whole did not take much stock of this Anglo-Teutonic institution, reserving its energies for New Year's Day.

"Bless the child!" said the General. "The *Christkind* always comes to the good children."

He walked to the mantelpiece for a light to his drooping china pipe, and stood looking down at his grandson like a benign old Bismarck. "And what would you like for a Christmas gift, little man?" he asked.

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"I would like," replied Tim slowly, "a coat like that of the Señora Lopez, which is blue, and then when you look at it the other way, it is green; and sometimes it is purple also."

"What is this?" asked the General in some surprise.

"It is the shot-silk costume of the Señora Lopez," explained his wife. "When she was here the other day we could not keep the child away from her."

"But this is vanity," observed the General, contemplating his grandson anew.

"Oh, I do not want it to wear," said Tim.

"Then, *lieber Gott!* for what do you want it?"

"To look at," replied the little boy.

. . . . . .

To Tim, the General's house in the Limache valley was the very ideal of bliss. The town house in the *Calle Hospital* was satisfactory enough, but it did not have a swimming pool at the foot of the garden, nor fields and meadows all around, nor the Bell Mountain—which Darwin climbed in 1832—towering above it into the blue sky. Tim felt a peculiar deep satisfaction in the Bell; when he was a baby they had always said at the farms "Put *el inglesito* with his face to the Campana, and you will hear no more of him." He looked forward to the day when he would be big enough to climb it, as Fritz and Kurt had done.

The General's country house, or rather, small holding, for it was not a pretentious place, was called the Criadero Santa Marta—the Nursery Garden of St. Martha. It was self-supporting; the *administrador* was a German-Chilian called Neckelmann, son of an old soldier of 1870, dead long before, who had come out to Chile as the General's orderly, and had married and settled in the country. Otto Neckelmann, or Ottito as he was barbarously called by his Chilian friends, made his living by working the little farm, the use of which the General gave him for nothing, and his wife, a German woman who had originally been somebody's nursemaid, kept house for the

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family when they went there. The couple throve mightily, what with hens, and horse-breeding, and the sale of plants and of blue-gum saplings, then beginning to be used on a great scale for re-afforesting the old woodlands which the improvidence of the Spaniards had destroyed, and they had good reason to be thankful for such a snug billet. They regarded themselves, and were regarded, almost as members of the family.

Motor-cars were unheard of then, and when the General's party went down a few days before Christmas they did so by train. His wife and Tim's mother had gone on in advance; the party consisted of the General himself, in unaccustomed mufti, very much stared at; his son Max, big, burly, and baked brick-red by the sun, also in plain clothes; Mr. Staveley, in holiday gray, with a Panama hat; Fritz and Kurt, wholesome little blonde Teutons; Tim, not yet quite six, a dark and slender child who seemed to inherit most of his looks from his Latin ancestry; Tim's Aunt Olga, Max's wife, with the two little girl babies and their nurse; and Brito, the General's orderly. With their luggage they formed quite an imposing array. Naval officers, coming out of the Admiralty buildings on the other side of the station railings, saluted the General with much respect. The public stared and said to one another: "There goes the old General and his family." Tim never noticed this; he was used to being an object of public interest.

The Chilian railways of those days had a peculiar eccentric charm of their own. The Port Station was a dilapidated building much in need of paint, and there were two long platforms about a foot high, the last places that any Chilian ever thought of patronizing. There were none of the formalities, the barriers and foot-bridges of an English railway; the permanent way was open to the street; old women selling fruit, urchins, pickpockets, and the traveling public wandered about the metals, climbing into and through empty coaches, while men on donkeys

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disputed the passage with the drivers of locomotives. The third class carriages were primitive vehicles, which boasted no upholstery for the best of reasons, but in them the lower orders, with their chickens, ducks, and livestock generally, seemed to manage sufficiently well. The first class had more pretensions, being imported American rolling stock, and except that the details, such as the communication cord and water supply, were always out of order, and that the windows either would not open or would not shut, they were comfortable enough. Nowhere in the world could you travel more cheaply; the fares were so insignificant that it seemed scarcely worth while to buy a ticket, which was perhaps the reason why so many of the passengers dispensed with that formality.

"My word!" remarked Mr. Staveley to his father-in-law, as they watched the scrimmage for seats, "it's a good thing you persuaded the Señora to go on ahead. She would have enjoyed herself in this."

The General so far forgot himself as to wink. "When she goes alone she is much happier," he observed. "Luggage acts on her like drink on an Indian."

The party were packed into the train with all their goods and chattels—the luggage vans were not popular, for it must be admitted that the people of the land had, as well as the cheerful souls, the light fingers of children, and it was only prudent to sit in sight of your effects—and in the fullness of time, for half an hour one way or the other was esteemed no great matter by the railway staff, the train trundled upon its journey. And if the scene at the Port Station had been eccentric, that at the country town of Limache was chaotic; for the train was invaded by hordes of ragged porters, who seized upon and carried off the luggage of those intending to disembark, and were with difficulty withheld from doing the same by that of those who did not. Meanwhile, elderly and excited females held up and flourished before the windows, much as the Paris mob brandished the head of the Princess de Lamballe, *meringues;* for Limache is celebrated for its

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*meringues,* and the inhabitants regarded travelers by rail as repositories of *meringues* and nothing else.

Forcing their way through a *barrage* of *meringues,* the travelers debouched upon the square outside the station, where the drivers of a motley collection of wheeled vehicles all went mad at the sight of possible clients. "Dear me!" remarked Mr. Staveley. "Shall we have a cabriolet or a barouche? Or a berline? Do let us have a berline! It appeals to my sense of the romantic; it's the sort of thing the Prince Regent used to drive about in. He might even have driven in that very one by the look of it. But, on second thoughts, perhaps better not; the wheel seems to be coming off. What about that prairie schooner over there?"

The General hired several of the more solid-looking of the rattle-traps, and they were soon jolting past high *adobe* walls, tile-crowned, in which double doors still showed the red and yellow transverse stripes of Spanish days. The inequalities of the road were masked in a layer of fine white dust, and a thin film settled almost immediately on clothes and faces; after a while they came into the wake of a herd of calves, whose conductor could be heard shouting: "Ho, then, little waifs!" through the murk. When they arrived at the railings of the Criadero Santa Marta they were reduced to living statuary, and created a little dust-storm as they alighted.

"Ah! There you are at last," said the Señora Hardt von Schulenberg, rustling forward to the gate as the vehicles drew up. *"Caramba,* we have been rushed off our feet getting ready for you. Is the luggage safe? My dressing case? How dusty you are! Where are the babies? I hope you remembered to lock up everything, Hans, and that Primitivo quite understands what to do in case anything goes wrong. *Ay, que calor!* Ah, there is Tim. Yes, you and Fritz and Kurt are in the same old room. *Valgame dios!* How should I know whether the toad is still in the orchard? One—two—three—four—five trunks. No, no, not in here—take it to the cart-shed.

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Yes, Hans, it is all very well to say not to trouble—you have not got a household to look after . . ."

The smiling Neckelmann, whose bulk no summer sun ever seemed to reduce, and his better half, most aggressively clean, as if she had used brick-dust instead of soap in honor of the occasion, took charge of the luggage, and cut short the curtseying and bobbing of the various underlings of the establishment. The Neckelmann twins, little girls of ten years old, with flaxen pigtails of such excruciating tightness as to give them a tip-toed appearance, and an effect of being about to fall on their faces at any moment, hung shyly in the background.

Tim ranged up alongside the jovial figure of Neckelmann, in his linen coat and multi-colored straw hat. They were firm allies; like most people, Neckelmann and his wife found him infinitely more interesting than his healthy little blonde cousins, who were thoroughly nice children, but not unusual. Quaint, old-fashioned ways are admired in the young; it is only when they grow up and continue to be abnormal that we begin to object to a dissimilarity to ourselves. "Did you buy any *meringues,* Señor Tim?" asked Neckelmann, *sotto voce.*

"No, we did not," replied the little boy.

"Good!" said Neckelmann. "It would have been terrible if you had arrived *satt.*" He stooped down and whispered behind his hand, with many nods and winks of understanding: *"Honigkuchen!"*

Frau Neckelmann's honey-cakes were things no child forgot. Tim set off for the house at a determined gallop. Then his conscience overcame him, and he returned for Fritz and Kurt. Even as a child he had no business head; being in on the ground floor, it did not occur to him to make use of it.

. . . . . .

"When I come to the farm," remarked Mr. Staveley, lying half-dressed in the shade of a tree, and watching the ascending spirals of blue smoke from his cigarette with

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dreamy eyes, "I always make up my mind to take advantage of the peace and quiet to do a little work. And what happens? I bathe in the *estero* in the morning to clear my head—a most exemplary thing to do. Then I go back and sample Frau Neckelmann's cooking, after which I meditate deeply for a while, and it is somehow dinner-time. My brain has only functioned once—perceptibly, that is—since we arrived here, and I cannot now recall exactly how that occurred; but it was some great thought in connection with cows, which has unfortunately escaped me since."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said a slim, small-boned man in English riding kit, with an eyeglass in his eye, who lay on his back with his hands under his head. "I usually find it the same when I come to my house here. I thought it was due to my racial indolence. But if you energetic Englishmen feel it also—"

"Not at all, my dear Gonzalez," replied Mr. Staveley. "English people have to rush about, because they live in such a vile climate that they couldn't keep warm otherwise. They soon drop it in Chile, as you may have noticed. If you moved a Chilian to the place where I was born, he'd soon be as brisk as a bee. For instance, on your ship the crew all seem to be polishing, and scrubbing, and—er—yo-hoing, just as hard as on any British man-of-war."

"That is true," agreed Captain Gonzalez of the Chilian Navy, an officer of distinction who had served much on British ships, and talked and looked and thought like an Englishman. His country house was near Limache, and he had fallen in with the General's party on their morning ride.

General Hardt von Schulenberg raised himself on one elbow. "It is indeed very pleasant here," he remarked, glancing with half-shut eyes of contentment along the line of the mossy stone weir, edged with cresses and sedge, which confined the pool. Kurt was cleaving the water in clean swift strokes; he had a natural gift for swimming,

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and was going to be a fine performer by and by. Further on Max was instructing his second son in the art of diving without emphasis; Tim, squatting naked in the shallows, was an interested spectator. He was timid in the water and hated diving, and therefore admired his cousins the more for their intrepid disregard of it. Nerón, the old house-dog, who was tied to a tree to prevent his floundering in and stirring up the mud, whimpered and shivered in frustrated ecstasy.

Down below the weir, in the river bed, the ponies blew and switched their tails at the flies. Amongst the prickly pear on the other side of the pool a white-whiskered old peasant in a lemon-yellow *poncho* sat his horse and grinned at the fun; he was Don Froilan Canto, an old soldier of the War of '79, who owned the little red-tiled *rancho* just visible across the tall maize in the field behind him. The shadows were squat and deep blue, for the sun was high overhead; an intense drowsy noon-day hush enfolded the earth. Far away in Old Limache a clock chimed sweetly.

"Tim, you are beginning to shiver," called his father. "Out you come, and get dressed."

Tim came out of the water and began to put on his clothes. Uncle Max strolled along the weir, picked up his towel, and began to rub his brawny back. Kurt gave a final flawless plunge from the branch of the old elm overhanging the pool, and as he climbed on to the embankment Fritz unleashed Nerón, who hurled himself with a rapturous yelp into the water, and began to swim round and round.

"Heigh ho! Christmas!" remarked Mr. Staveley, setting his hat upon his damp locks and scrambling to his feet. He looked at the heat shimmer in the low-lying valley bottom. "Rather different in England to-day, I expect. . . . You're dining with us, aren't you, Gonzalez? Good. That's a nice little pony you've got for Tim, General."

. . . . . .

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Tim had gone to bed on Christmas Eve firmly resolved not to sleep a wink, for he had reached the age of doubt, and wished to satisfy himself by personal inspection regarding the source of Christmas presents. His acute mind had seized on the flaw in the Santa Klaus idea—the labels and tickets from friends and relations. However, as is usual in such cases, he slept heavily until his customary time for awakening.

Fritz and Kurt were already exclaiming over their presents when Tim opened his eyes; he crawled from his sheets, and investigated the pillow-slip which hung from his own bedrail. A neat square package, "From Father and Mother," first engaged his attention, and he untied it with pleasurable emotions. A large square wooden box of paints, a sketching block, pencils! He caught his breath; this was pleasure and promotion combined. Previously he had had to content himself with the little tin boxes that you could buy for twenty-five cents; this was like his father's sacred outfit, on which he had gloated from afar.

His other presents—even the pony from his grandfather and grandmother, Tim's first, and an overwhelming thing for any child to receive—did not afford him such a deep sense of satisfaction; they were splendid, perfectly splendid, but they did not go to his soul. And now, while the rest of the family were decorating the Christmas tree in the cart-shed, Tim stole away to the end of the veranda, to test the resources of his treasure. He wanted to be alone; he could not have borne it if people had been about, peering and prying and asking how he was getting on. The quick sub-tropical darkness would soon be falling; already the candles in the shrine of the Virgin of Los Maitenes, across the main road, were gleaming with an emphasized distinctness. The great bulk of the Bell was turning an ineffable, an incredible soft pink, a color no artist would dare to reproduce for fear of being accused of exaggeration; the sky behind was that pale clear gold which only months of rainless weather can produce; at

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the head of the valley the foothills were already misty and purpling as the high lights of the day relaxed. The little boy spread out his materials on the top step, and began.

Rapidly he sketched in pencil outlines, with a remarkable assurance of touch; then he turned to the colors, and began to mix and spread and wash. He worked at speed, racing against the quick fading of the landscape. The shadows fell over the valley, and the veranda quickly became quite dark; Frau Neckelmann came from the kitchen and lit the swinging lamp in the *comedor* without noticing him. In the big barn Mr. Staveley, after a strenuous hour of hanging presents and colored glass balls, called over his shoulder: "Tim, just run and get my— Hullo! Where *is* Tim?"

Nobody seemed to know. Mr. Staveley, a conscientious parent, went to look.

He walked through the dusk of the garden, climbed the veranda steps, and caught sight of a little dark humped shape at the end of it. "Tim!" he called. "Is that you?" No answer. "Tim!" No answer. Mr. Staveley took three quick steps. "Why, Tim, you're crying!" he said in surprise. "What's the matter, old man?"

The budding Corot put his head on his knees and sobbed bitterly. "I can't do it," he mourned, "I can't do it. And, oh, I did so want to."

His father took the damp sketching-block to the light of the *comedor* window, and looked from it to the ghostly majesty of the Bell, still faintly pink-tipped by the last vestiges of the setting sun. Then, moved by a complex emotion that was only half amusement, he slipped an arm round his son's small shoulders. "Never mind, Tim," he comforted. "You've got to learn to use your medium, you know. At one time I couldn't do my own work properly, do you know that?"

"Couldn't you, father?" replied Tim, incredulous.

"Not for toffee. Everybody's got to learn. If you want to badly enough, in the end you'll catch the sunset on the Bell and put it down on paper. But only if you

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want to hard enough, never forget that. And now come on and see the Christmas tree."

Tim never did forget it.

Among the thousands of little tin cans and wooden boxes which held the burly Neckelmann's eucalyptus nursery, there were a few which held pine seedlings. Every year he planted more cones, and each Christmas selected a little sapling of suitable growth for the General in Valparaiso. The annual Christmas tree gave the old warrior a great deal of pleasure, and it was a sight to see him dressing the branches, and superintending the bestowal of glass balls and candles, as if he had never in his life dressed a decimated squadron, nor ordered the disposal of more sinister tree-furniture.

It had always been his custom to include in the ceremony not only his own immediate family, but also the swarming juveniles of the neighboring hillside, who were in consequence growing up firm devotees of Santa Klaus, however little he might be regarded elsewhere in the country. On this occasion he had been looking forward to practicing his benevolence on an altogether virgin stage, and he had brought with him two enormous boxes of the necessary toys and trappings. After tea the whole family labored, and transformed the large cart-shed into a veritable grotto with colored flags and streamers, greenery and candles. It was indeed a gorgeous tree, and when the guests from the village arrived, padding barefoot through the dust like little silent ghosts, they could scarcely speak for awe of it. Sixpence a day and your cottage, which was all their parents earned, does not run to much in the way of illuminations.

Out of the dusk they came, first in ones and twos, and then by half-dozens and scores, and they were not so much shy as speechless as they squatted on their hunkers and gazed. Even the babes in arms were brought to see the marvel, and lay unwinking in the arms of mothers and elder sisters, staring at the candles. Behind the rows of spell-bound children stood a fringe of attendant parents,

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scarcely less affected and shorn of their customary garrulity, only capable of murmuring *"Que Lindo!"* and *"Maravilloso!"* in reverent voices.

But this cathedral atmosphere was not the General's idea at all, and he soon had Neckelmann playing a lively tune upon his fiddle, and had formed all the children into procession, the youngest at the front, to despoil the bending branches of the tree. The silence melted into cheerful babble, rising into shrieks of pure joy as the parcels were unfastened. It was a very hot night, and the General and his helpers worked until the perspiration ran down their faces. The ladies were scarcely less active, distributing the good things brought from the kitchen by the panting Frau Neckelmann in groaning tray-loads, which seemed to empty themselves of their contents by magic.

"Hot work," remarked Uncle Max. "More *dulces chilenos,* Olga. We have absorbed all these."

"By George!" said Mr. Staveley, mopping a heated brow. "No more entertaining kids for me. Give me lion-taming or prize-fighting—something restful."

Everybody had a present, down to the very babies, and everybody was sticky and incoherent with pleasure, and had to give vent to overcharged feelings in prances and chortles of unalloyed ecstasy. *"Ach,* what a battlefield!" remarked the General, wading amongst the burst crackers and streamers when all was done. "I think we have earned our dinner."

Judging from the impassioned "Viva!" of the departing guests, they thought so too.

. . . . . .

They sat down to *cazuela,* a trifling dish, composed of soup, spring chicken, potatoes, rice, carrots, green corn on the cob, and a dozen other things, which, to be adequately confronted, requires a knife, fork, and spoon. Next came *zapallos rellenos*—young pumpkins cut in halves and stuffed with seasoning. Then came the Turkey —he deserves a capital letter—with yams and stuffing and sausage. Christmas pudding, of course, would not bear

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thinking of at that time of year; instead they had a most marvelous *bombe,* brought in ice on the afternoon train by the emissary of a Valparaiso pastrycook, and glittering as frostily as Santa Klaus himself could have wished.

"We *ought* to have lighted brandy round this," said Mr. Staveley gravely. "Ought we not, Señora?"

"Now, Carlos, how can one have lighted brandy round an ice?" replied the old lady in all seriousness.

Then came the odds and ends, the early peaches, passion-fruit, pomegranates, wood-strawberries, medlars, custard-apples, almonds, raisins and figs. Tall bottles of Chilian Rhine wine, differing only from the original in that it is better if you know your vineyards, stood about the board, while the youngsters had *aloja de culen* of Frau Neckelmann's brewing, which is a sort of super stone-ginger.

"Now, Neckelmann, play!" cried the General, as the final crackers popped, and the *administrador* produced his fiddle and executed *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht,* with much feeling and sweetness. An urge to perform manifested itself generally. Mr. Staveley did conjuring tricks with cards and nuts, which were so transparent, and such abject failures, that they were diverting beyond words. Uncle Max sang *Im Keller kuhl,* going to such profundities of bass that the chins of the company receded noticeably at the low notes. Captain Gonzalez, the guest of honor, sang (in English) *The Fighting Navy,* then much in vogue. The Señora could not sing, but she could and did recite, to everybody's surprise, a long poem in Spanish about freedom and tyranny and O'Higgins, delivering it with fine fire and spirit.

"Where did you learn that, Señora, may I ask?" said Mr. Staveley, genuinely interested.

"From my Uncle Jaime, who sailed with Lord Cochrane," she replied. "He taught me when I was a little girl. *Pobre tio!* He was shot against the wall of his town house in Santiago, in some of the troubles of those days."

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The General rose from his seat, and took down Neckelmann's father's old Sedan saber from over the mantelpiece. "Now *I* will show you tricks," he observed, beaming. "Who will throw me a cake?"

Some one obliged, and he caught it on the point with much dexterity, following suit with a green peach. "Catch this, General!" cried Mr. Staveley suddenly, lobbing another missile. It was an over-ripe custard-apple, and could not have been caught with anything short of a bucket. The company shared that custard-apple fairly equally, and the General made use of a military word or two before his good humor reasserted itself. But that was before the company had finished laughing.

Then they had snapdragon, singeing their eyebrows and burning their fingers in the good old style, and what with the excitement, and the food he had put away, and the long day (it was much past his usual bed time), Tim must have nodded, for his grandmother cried: *"Por dios!* Look at Tim! Another moment, and the child will be under the table."

Father and uncle both tried to blame it on heredity from the other's side of the family, and he was carried away and put to bed in a daze, to dream a wonderful dream in which he was sitting on his pony and painting the Bell, until he found himself swimming in the river with Captain Gonzalez beside him, regarding him searchingly and asking: "Why should we sing of Tommy Atkins, with never a word for Jack?" He had no idea of the answer, and it drove other images out of his head, and so swept him away on the easy tide of childhood's slumber until very late next morning.

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## CHAPTER III

### *SHADES OF THE PRISON HOUSE*

TIM received his first object lesson in the blessings of education—or the curse of it—however you may choose to regard the matter—at the age of five. "Ana, *digame por favor,* how old are you?" he asked one day, when his mind was considering the mysteries of birthdays.

The old nurse stopped her crocheting, and looked at the expectant child. She was not in the least sensitive regarding her years, but found it a little difficult to reply, for, like many of her contemporaries, she was uncertain of numbers over ten, and had not the least idea of her age. "I was a married woman at the time of the *bombardeo,*" she fenced. She referred to the bombardment of Valparaiso by the Spanish fleet in the middle 'sixties.

Tim digested this. "But how many *aniversarios* have you had?" he persisted.

"*Quien sabe, pues?* Nineteen, perhaps. You should ask my son: he has had education, and understands such things."

"What! Have you got a little boy too?"

"Little boy!" A convulsive undulation of Ana's mighty bulk indicated that she was amused. "*Por dios!* He has grandchildren older than you."

"Then how old is he?"

"Now how should I know? Twenty-nine, I think. Do I not tell you, you should ask him? He has the education. . . ."

. . . . . .

Mongrel dogs are notoriously more intelligent than those of one strain, and Tim's mixed blood had brought him gifts. His relatives had been diverted in his baby



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days by his bright and ingenuous remarks; he was not a voluble child, but possessed an observant nature, and when he spoke he usually did so to the point. His father had been amused by this; when Tim, after having been taught the alphabet by his mother at the age of five, learnt to read by himself in a surprisingly short space of time and began to consume books voraciously, he had been proud; but when he found the boy, shortly before his seventh birthday, reading *The Light That Failed* with apparent comprehension and enjoyment, he was partly amused and partly alarmed. "It's all very fine," he remarked to his father-in-law, "but the kid's altogether too precocious."

Tim was at that time attending Tant' Helene's *kindergarten,* to which he had been committed at the age of six; it was a cheerful little dame's school, full of cheerful little flaxen-haired Germans, and kept by a cheerful little dame. Tant' Helene was a fat, twinkly, chuckly, German *frau,* though what she found to twinkle at was difficult to understand, for she had lost her husband under tragic circumstances, and the care of infants, be they never so cherubic, is undeniably wearing. However, she was never seen out of temper, and her assistant, Fräulein Lotti, was of a similarly equable turn of mind. The pupils were taught games of a sort likely to encourage the dawn of intelligence; they wove rush mats, did modeling of a sort of pre-Epstein school, and sang songs in chorus, so that no *alumnus* was ever able to see Grand Opera in after life without thinking of Tant' Helene. The literary labors of the establishment did not aspire to anything beyond elementary sentences, and those of course in German.

"Where the brat has picked up his unholy knowledge from I can't tell," went on Mr. Staveley. "Have you ever seen him reading the paper in the kitchen? The most absurd little sight—and the servants all listen as if he were a Fellow of the Royal Society. I suppose it's natural enough for him to speak three languages, but I caught him the other day saying a word or two of Latin to old

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Padre Ramon when he came to see the Señora, and it appears the old man has made rather a pet of him and it's by way of being a private joke of theirs. And he's picked up a little French from that old woman at the cake shop—he told me that I ought to speak it too, and then Madame would give me *bonbons*. I only wish I could—you know what my Spanish and German are like. He takes it as the ordinary thing. . . . Thank goodness he's got no idea of being clever—he isn't a prig, at any rate."

"I expect Kurt and Fritz would attend to that, if there were any danger of it," said the General, laughing. Kurt and Fritz were of the best German type, intelligent above the average, and athletes besides. They could run, swim, box, fence, and throw the discus and the javelin (quite popular pursuits of the Teuton) with conspicuous ability, while Tim's performances at these manly sports were fraught with peril either to himself or the onlookers. His two cousins, with all the scorn of older small boys, called him a *dummkopf* with two left hands, and he accepted the the judgment of his peers in all humility.

"He's going to be able to sketch, too, later on," ruminated Mr. Staveley. "Well, I shall have to watch him. I remember that when I was at school there was a boy of nine who could beat the Head at chess, although they didn't allow him to play more than once a month. I never thought that I should become the parent of a—a cockatrice like that. Though I must say Tim doesn't look a bulbous-browed prodigy—poor Masterson did."

"What became of him?" asked the General. "No doubt a boy with such gifts has become famous?"

"That's the pathetic part of it," replied Mr. Staveley. "He went quite mad at sixteen, and died before he was twenty-one. That's why I'm particularly aware of the necessity for caution with abnormally brilliant children."

"I do not think that you need trouble yourself. Tim is not abnormal—he is as healthy a little boy as any one would wish to see. He will do you much credit if he is properly handled."

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"Well, perhaps so. . . . I must say *The Light That Failed* rather stuck in my gullet. But put it that way if you like. My contention is that the proper way is to go slow. However, Tant' Helene is not likely to hurt him—nor Miss Pilbeam. He goes to her next term."

. . . . . .

Miss Pilbeam was a middle-aged English spinster with a very red nose—which Mr. Staveley always pointedly ascribed to pastry, with an air of meaning which was a gross libel on the excellent lady—and altogether an incongruous figure in that *galère*. The explanation was quite simple; she had come to Chile to keep house for a brother, since deceased, and as she could get a safe eight per cent. on her slender capital in Valparaiso, where there was also a great demand for English governesses and companions she had elected to remain there.

She was a governess of the old type, and a very good soul; it never entered her honest head to consider whether her inability to assimilate any new fact herself, or to communicate the little she did know to others in any intelligible form, might not perhaps render her ineligible for the pursuit of pedagogy. She had a simple practical philosophy, and she knew that all children were taught certain lessons, just as they were taught not to drink out of their saucers; why they should learn either of these things did not come into question.

She confronted Tim across the schoolroom table from which Kurt and Fritz had been in turn promoted to the German school, a sister at whom Pallas Athene might have been rather astonished, in ladylike black frock adorned with much ruching and many bugles, and the high whalebone collar of the day. Beside her lay her reticule, an angular object rather like the hammer of a paleolithic man, and a damp handkerchief with which she now and then dabbed her nose—she suffered from a chronic sniffle. "Now, Timothy," she said, "we will do French. Have you ever had any lessons in French at your *kindergarten?*"

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"No, Miss Pilbeam," replied Tim with perfect truth.

"Never mind," she encouraged. "It is quite easy." And indeed, for all she knew, it might have been; she could scarcely speak three consecutive words in that language. She opened a battered *French for Beginners,* and displayed to Tim the following diagram or rune:

| | |
|---|---|
| *J'ai*<br>*Tu as*<br>*Il a* | I have<br>Thou hast<br>He has |
| *Nous avons*<br>*Vous avez*<br>*Ils ont* | We have<br>You have<br>They have |

Miss Pilbeam read this over slowly. "Now see if you can read it after me," she instructed.

"But what does it mean?" asked Tim in some bewilderment. He had never see a text-book before.

"It's the present tense of the verb *avoir* to have," explained Miss Pilbeam.

"Is it?"

"Yes. *Avoir* is the French for 'to have.'"

"I know that, of course," said Tim.

Miss Pilbeam sat up. "I thought you said that you had not any lessons in French?" she observed sharply.

"I never have," replied Tim. "But Madame Châtelard at the *Pâtisserie Française* talks that talk, so do I too, when I go there."

"Oh, I see!" Miss Pilbeam relaxed again. This did not appear to her to have much bearing on the matter in hand; she had always thought—or no, that is scarcely correct, for Miss Pilbeam was of the type that accepts and never thinks—at any rate, according to her ideas the power of speaking a foreign tongue was a personal attribute, which you either had or had not, like red hair. She had never heard foreigners talking together until she was

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nearly forty, and she could not help regarding a foreign idiom as a kind of trick or bad habit, from which, if discouraged with sufficient pertinacity, the victims might be cured. She herself, though she had been nearly fifteen years in Chile, could not speak any coherent Spanish; she managed with a sort of pidgin, and despised her hearers very much for their crassness in rendering necessary the employment of this. To her mind the teaching of French to children, though nominally directed towards linguistic proficiency, was in reality a sort of culture. One taught it because—well, because one always did. It was not seriously to be expected that they would ever be able to speak French as a result of their studies, any more than she could herself. "Well, repeat after me: *J'ai,* I have."

"But it doesn't make sense," protested Tim. "I have what? Nobody ever says 'I have, thou hast, he has,' in English. Why should one do it in French?"

"Because the book says so," replied Miss Pilbeam firmly, obviously thinking that that settled it.

Tim's unblurred mind did not take much stock of that as a reason. He did not realize that he had stumbled across an axiom, which, with the exception of the laws of self-interest, has more influence than any other upon the conduct of mankind.

. . . . . .

Mr. Staveley was quite well aware of the inadequacies of Miss Pilbeam as a teacher, but he did not complain, for he reasoned that at any rate she would not be able to tire Tim out. This was true enough, for the boot was on the other leg; Miss Pilbeam found that to try to guide Tim's mind was somewhat like trying to catch a drop of quicksilver. Most children were fidgety and inattentive, and that she expected and understood; Tim was difficult in a way that she had not previously experienced. She did not remember a child who took such an uncanny interest in his lessons, and she sometimes wished he wouldn't. He learnt so fast that he ran away from her laborious teaching. He was critical and insubordinate regarding the

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methods of her hand-books, and he asked questions until she became at first flustered and then hopelessly silenced, and could only resort to discipline to gag him. At the same time she grew very fond of him, and sniffed worse than ever on her final morning, before gathering up her reticule and walking away with her skirt gathered in her customary discreet handful behind her lower dorsal curve.

Miss Pilbeam lasted a year, and she might have lasted longer had it not been for an educational opportunity presenting itself to Mr. Staveley which he was too wise to ignore. By the time Tim was eight his father had been confirmed in his ideas regarding the possibilities of his offspring, and he was giving an increasing amount of thought to the problem of future education—and education is rather a problem in South America. Fritz and Kurt went to the German School, and a very good school it was; but Mr. Staveley had in mind for later on an English public school and university, and he knew very well that preparatory training ought to be subordinated to the standards of these. There were English schools in Chile which might have done, but the objection to them in Mr. Staveley's eyes was that the pupils were not confined to those of British blood, and he opined that the son of an Italian grocer, say, was not likely to exert the best of influences on the mind of a budding genius.

While casting about for a solution to his problem he happened to mention the matter to Don Tomás Bannister, the veteran head of the great British firm of Ritchie, Clewes & Co. Don Tomás was a dissolute old gentleman, but he was one of the few members of the British community whose intellectual orbit approached Mr. Staveley's own. "I'm bothered about my boy's education," he said. "Of course, he'll be going home to a public school at the proper age, but he's got to be prepared on the right lines. I don't want to go home myself just now—can't, without chucking my work—and I don't fancy sending the boy off alone to an English prep. school. He's a brainy sort

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of child, and I'd like to keep an eye on him. Besides, his mother wouldn't part with him in any case. What do you recommend?"

The merchant prince took thought. "If you really want to do it in style," he said, "why don't you get young Macleod?"

"Macleod? Who's he?"

"Tutor fellow. He's been looking after Sandiland's kids, but they've gone home now. First class man, I believe."

"Um!" remarked Mr. Staveley, and then added delicately: "What's he doing out here?" He had a lingering doubt that perhaps the tutor's residential preferences might be based on drawbacks similar to those of Don Tomás himself.

"Oh, nothing fishy," replied Don Tomás, reading the other's thoughts perfectly well, and not in the least offended. "He's asthmatic. Can't stand the climate at home."

So Mr. Staveley made overtures to Mr. Macleod, and a long and mutually satisfactory connection ensued. Mr. Macleod was a tall young man, about thirty years old, of exceedingly frail physique. He had unhandsome but extremely kindly Scotch features, and was given to the smoking of vile-smelling herbal cigarettes. It did not take Mr. Staveley long to realize that he had got hold of a jewel, and on his side Mr. Macleod was very well satisfied, for it is not given to many teachers to find such a sympathetic subject as Tim was. Modern languages had been, in actual fact, child's play to the boy, and by the time he was ten, thanks to that good priest Father Raymond, he no longer regarded Latin as a dead tongue. He read Virgil as another boy might read Shakespeare. Under Mr. Macleod's skillful hands he came easily into the possession of many things, and incidentally of an entirely flawless English accent, no small achievement in such polyglot surroundings; the tendency of the children

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to mix their languages had always been sternly checked, but Tim might easily have developed some ugly Anglo-Chilian inflection had it not been for Mr. Macleod's beautiful clear-cut English, the characteristic precise speech of the educated North Briton. Even Fritz and Kurt were affected by association with him, and had perfect English accents. Little did anybody guess to what a sinister ending the possession of this accomplishment was to lead one of them, or the share that Tim was to have in it.

No boy was ever better prepared for the Public Schools Entrance Examination; but as it turned out this was not of much consequence, for Tim never went to a public school, nor to an English university either. That, however, is looking too far ahead.

. . . . . .

It was during these years that Tim was inducted into another, perhaps the most important, subject in the educational career of the male young, which so far no pundit has ever managed to reduce to dry bones in a text book. I refer, of course, to the unexplainable attraction of the other sex.

"I hear that the Quinta Miraflores is let again," remarked the General one morning. Tim must have been about twelve years of age at the time, and he and his father were living in his grandfather's house.

"Oh, really?" replied Mr. Staveley, looking up from the pages of the morning's *Mercurio*. "Well, let's hope the new tenant doesn't beat his wife, and hasn't a gramophone. My bedroom looks that way."

"It is an English family," observed Kurt.

"Though on the whole," continued Mr. Staveley, following his own train of thought, "I think that of the two evils I should prefer a wife-beater. A domestic squabble seldom lasts as long as the infinite repetition of a new double-sided dance record. Of course, it is always possible that the man may be merely an amateur carpenter, but— What did you remark?"

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"Kurt thinks that the people are English," said the General.

"Ha, good! That will save us a lot of trouble. We shall spend our time studiously ignoring each other for five years, saying good morning for five more, and finish up as acquaintances in the year 1924. I do not think that you Germans fully appreciate the finer points of the British character."

"I appreciated the truly British characteristics of our last neighbor," remarked the General dryly. "Especially on the nights when he returned late from the English Club."

The house next door was the property of an English merchant, frequently absent for long spells in Europe, during which he used to let it furnished. It had passed through the hands of, first, a *coterie* of bachelors from the Anglo-South American Bank, jovial souls addicted to merry evenings which lasted until dawn and were hard on the furniture; second, a vague and haphazard lady more destructive than the bachelors, who had removed the water-colors executed by the owner's deceased daughter, objects of sentimental attachment, from the drawing-room to the coal-cellar, without troubling to replace them when she left; and third, the tenant mentioned by the General, an English stock-broker of convivial habit, who had failed on the Bolsa in the middle of his lease, and had departed without bothering about the arrears of rent. It was naturally interesting to speculate on what next the Fates might have in store for the unfortunate proprietor.

A day or two later, as Tim and his grandfather were coming back from a stroll, they met the new tenants descending the hill. They were harmless in appearance, so typically English as to resemble the creation of some foreign caricaturist. The husband had protruding teeth and a pipe, and a sort of tweed molehill of a hat, while the wife wore a tartan skirt much shorter than the fashions then decreed. They talked in loud clear voices, without looking at each other, and had that appearance of perma-

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nent distrust in the sanitation which is the hall-mark of a certain type of English person abroad. With them was an entirely charming little girl of about Tim's own age.

"*So! Engländer!*" remarked the General.

When these people had passed, Tim looked back. The little girl was looking back too, and smiling. He went on with a most peculiar and novel sensation of adventure and excitement, endeavoring to pay attention to his grandfather's reflections on why it was that English people never seemed to look like English people until they had left England. "You seldom see folks of such an odd appearance in London. Why then should they be so prevalent in other countries?"

"The little girl looked ordinary enough, grandad," observed Tim.

"What girl?" asked the General. "Ah, yes, of course, there was a child with them."

She was clearly a matter of indifference to him, and if Tim had had any inclination towards analyzing his feelings aloud, this effectually killed it.

On the next opportunity—that afternoon, to be precise—he thought it would be a good idea to climb a tree giving an oblique view of the garden next door. He did this quite without prejudice, of course, and was elaborately casual with himself about it. When he reached a suitable elevation he discovered the encounter of the morning sedately reading a book and quite unaware of his presence, itself a sufficiently surprising thing in view of the crackle of twigs and grunts of exertion which had accompanied his upward progress.

Tim found an unexpected difficulty in introducing himself. "Hullo!" he said painfully, conscious of a redness about the ears and neck.

She turned towards him with elaborate unconcern. "Hullo yourself!" she retorted.

They regarded one another. The conversation showed signs of languishing. "I passed you out walking this morning," said Tim at length.

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"Did you? I don't remember. Where was it?"

"Why, just outside our front door," Tim replied, surprised, in his ignorance of feminine wiles, that she should have forgotten so soon. "You were with your father and mother. Or at least, I suppose it was your father and mother."

"Yes, it was Dad and Mum." She had a very clear skin, he observed, dusted over with freckles, not like Fritz, whose complexion resembled a robin's egg, but in a more restrained and pleasing way. "Can you get on to the wall?"

Tim thought so, and, with a risky scramble, did so.

"Who was with you this morning?" she asked, ignoring her previous pose. "Dad said he looked like Bismarck, and must be a German."

"He is a German. He's my grandfather."

"Then I suppose you're a German too."

"No, I'm not." For some unexplained reason Tim felt quite indignant at this. "I'm English, like my father. He's a Fellow of the Royal Zoölogical Society."

She seemed impressed, but immediately rallied. "*My* father's Acting British Vice-Consul," she countered.

"That must be interesting," said Tim inanely. "What does he do?"

"Oh, he stamps things, and marries people. And he gives people passports."

Tim thought that this must be an ideal way of passing the time, and said so.

"Oh, it's not really," she replied. "Dad says it's unremunerative toil in the service of a thankless country. Do you know what a burrocracy is?"

"A bureaucracy?"

"That's it."

This was the sort of thing that Tim, unnatural child that he was, knew about. "It means a lot of clerks in offices who run things," he explained, with conscious superiority.

She seemed disappointed. "I thought it had some-

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thing to do with a *burro,*" she confessed. "You know, like the baker's *burro,* with the paniers on each side. It sounds as if it did when father talks about it. An imbecile burrocracy, he says. That's another of the things he grumbles at."

"Have you just come to Chile?" asked Tim.

"Oh, no. We've been here nearly two years. Dad says they must have put him into the wrong file at the Foreign Office."

Tim felt himself getting out of his depth. "What does he mean by that?" he asked.

"Well, we don't often stay in a place as long as two years," she explained. "We were in Rome before, and in Copenhagen before that. And before that Dad was in Nagasaki, but I was at home with Mum."

"But why do you move about so much?" Tim persisted, in some perplexity. "It must be a frightful nuisance."

"It is. You should hear Dad. But that's what they do to people in the Consular Service."

"But why do they?"

"I don't know. They do. Dad says it's for fear some Consul might learn the language of the country he's in, and begin to earn his salary, which would be against the traditions of the service. But that's only his way."

The matter sounded very absurd, and Tim gave it up, thinking that she must be wrong in her facts somewhere. He still had quite a touching faith in the powers which ordered the world.

"Where did you live before—when you first came here, I mean?" he inquired.

"We had another house, further down the hill. But we left there because of the drains. Mum said they were out of order, and Dad said there weren't any. Do you live all alone with your grandfather?"

"Oh, no. There's my father, and my grandmother, and my aunt and uncle, and my four cousins."

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"I've seen your grandmother, then. She must be the fat old lady who was scolding the gardener. I haven't seen your cousins, but I've heard them. They talk nasty spitty German."

Traitor that he was to his kith and kin, Tim found himself making excuses for them to an acquaintance of ten minutes' standing. "They're not bad sorts really," he said apologetically. "But you see, they are German. They can speak English too, though."

"I'd rather be English," she replied. "Why did you climb that tree?"

"I don't know. I just happened to."

"Do you often?"

"Not very often," he admitted, but added hopefully: "But I will, now that you're here."

She affected extreme unconcern. "I may be here, sometimes," she conceded. "If I'm not— Oh, dear! Do you hear any one calling?"

Tim listened. An irritated feminine voice could be heard wailing, from the direction of the house: "Viola, Viola! Where can the child be? Viola, your practicing!"

Tim's new friend giggled. "That's Mum," she remarked. "I must go now, or she'll have one of her headaches. I ought to be doing my scales. Good-by!"

She fled up the path. Halfway to the house she stopped, and came back a few steps. "What's your name?" she asked.

"Tim Staveley."

"Well, come again, Tim," she said, and was gone.

Tim did go again, and the excellent Macleod experienced a quite unusual lack of concentration on his part during this period. Indeed, as he told Mr. Staveley, his charge was wool-gathering like an ordinary human boy. Compelled by the innate shyness of childhood they kept the acquaintanceship a secret; it was the first time in his life that Tim concealed any of his comings and goings from his father.

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This idyll lasted only a month. Presumably the Foreign Office found Viola's father in the pigeon-hole where he had been mislaid, and tried to make up for their carelessness with the rapidity with which they shifted him. The trunks and boxes that Tim had seen being carried in next door could scarcely have been unpacked before they were called into use again, and the new neighbors were gone.

Tim had been away for a long week-end to the Criadero Santa Marta, and when he returned he went down the garden, all unaware, to the meeting-place. As a rule he tactfully awaited some sound from the other side before announcing his presence, but this time he heard his name called anxiously as soon as his footsteps approached. Evidently something was wrong.

"Oh, Tim!" cried Viola, as his face came over the wall. "We're going!"

"Going?" he repeated in bewilderment.

"Yes. Father heard on Saturday. We're going to Buda Pesth."

"But when?" he asked still unable to grasp it.

"Now. This very minute. The cabs are at the door. And, oh, Tim, I was so afraid you wouldn't come back in time, and I should have to go without saying good-by."

Tim jumped from the wall, and she caught his hand as he landed. It was the first time they had ever been on level ground together. "But, Viola—" he began helplessly. They stared at one another with wide eyes, not knowing what to say in face of this tragedy. There came a bustle and a crying out from the house above.

"Now I must go." Her eyes were suddenly wet. "Don't forget me. I'm so glad you came back in time. Good-by, Tim."

She flung her arms round his neck and kissed him. He heard her retreating foosteps, and a sob, but could not see her go for a curious hot feeling at the back of his eyes.

He was unable to get back over the wall, and had to go

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round the house and so into the street and to his own door. Fortunately nobody noticed him in the activities of the departure, and he was saved the unbearable humiliation of having to explain his presence.

Thus Tim tasted, for the first time, the herb bitter-sweet which is called Love.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *THE FIRST POUNCE*

IN the summer that ran from 1905 into 1906—for, you will remember, below the line the seasons are inverted—that grim Pursuer who dogs our every step, watching what we eat and how we cross the road, until He catches us at last and lays us by the heels, made a grab at Tim; and then, thwarted, made another, less tidily; and a year later another, though this was not so much an attempt at assassination as a running *amok*. They were all unsuccessful, or else Tim's history would scarcely have been worth while writing, much less reading; but the trilogy of misfortune which follows marks an epoch, for never again did the tranquil backwater in which his life had started recover its pristine smoothness.

The first pounce of the invisible Footpad befell thus.

It was a fresh spring morning, with early peach blossom showing in the orchard, and new green on the trees in the *quebrada* across the *Camino Cintura*. There was a hum in the air which was not that of week-day toil, nor yet quite that of Sunday's mass-going passers-by; snatches of song drifted up from the hillside *ranchos*, and from far away came the rhythmic beat of the *cueca*, first forerunner of a million pairs of hands clapping to the double time which would be busy up and down the land before evening. Looking in from the garden Tim could see Teresa and Clarissa, the housemaids, making a bed, and when they came to the foot of it they set to one another in the first steps of the national dance, singing a little verse about a hundred and fifty *pesos*. On the terrace Brito, the soldier-servant, in the spotless white patrol



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jacket and the dark blue breeches of his regiment, whistled the same tune, as his fathers had done before him on this particular day. For it was September the Eighteenth —the Diez-y-Ocho.

The Diez-y-Ocho is no ordinary holiday in Chile. It is *the* day, and on it the Chilians throw off the tyranny of work just as a century ago their ancestors threw off the yoke of Spain. In 1905 there were still ancients in the villages who could remember the first Diez-y-Ocho, and the hoisting of the first Star and Tricolor.

There was a quite unusual bustle amongst the General's domestic staff. They shot about their business with cheerful alacrity, in haste to be done and away to the merry parties of friends and relatives who were already gathering, with wicker-covered *damajuanas* of good red wine, clean white bundles of eatables, and the inevitable guitar, for a day's revelry *al fresco*. In the kitchen they were cutting sandwiches and hard-boiling eggs with flustered rapidity, under the lash of the Señora's admonitory tongue. The General, his son, and Captain Gonzalez, whose ship, the *O'Higgins,* chanced to be in the bay, were walking up and down the terrace in talk; Kurt and Fritz and Tim roosted in the trees like fowls, watching the road for the first sign of the horses and carriages which were to take them all out for the day.

At last they jingled round the corner of the *Camino,* the grinning drivers waved, and the children tumbled earthwards, crying: *"Ahi vienen! Ya vienen los coches y los caballos!"*

The Señora heard them, and exhorted her underlings at an immense rate. She was behindhand with her preparations, as she usually contrived to be. The General called in Spanish through the kitchen archway, in carefully casual tones: "Ines, the horses will be here soon."

"There! You see? You see?" cried the old lady to her following. "The *patron* says that the horses are here, and the things are not half ready. I knew it would be so! Francisca, you are cutting that bread far too thick—

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that is not a sandwich, it is half a loaf. Give me the knife, girl. No, not that knife—the other, the sharp one with the green handle. Then where is it? In the larder? Get it, stupid, get it! And the other packet of butter—this is yesterday's. Yes, yes, Hans, I know! They must wait, that is all. Do you not see me, surrounded by a pack of fools. . . ."

The wise veteran, having seen this performance innumerable times in forty years of matrimony, went off and found his daughter, who came into the kitchen immediately and engaged the old lady, so that the distracted servants could get on with their work; which they did, without any apparent need of guidance whatever. Mrs. Staveley and the cook packed the eatables as fast as they could, but this was not very fast, for the Señora would transfer things from one basket to another, and put aside the most essential articles on the window sill and the mantelpiece to ensure their not being forgotten. But it was done at last, and the old lady, proceeding to the next step in her ritual, interviewed each and every one of the servants going to the *fiesta,* and impressed upon them divers moral principles, no doubt highly valuable if inculcated in early youth, but not likely to bear much fruit as it was. After this there remained only Primitivo the *mayordomo,* who was taking care of the house during the absence of the family; he had done this a thousand times before, but on each new occasion his mistress felt it necessary to instruct him regarding every possible contingency, from fire to dry-rot in the woodwork. Meanwhile the cavalcade exercised its patience as best it might in the *patio,* until Mrs. Staveley, seizing her opportunity, neatly cut out the old lady, and conveyed her, flushed with the joy of battle, to her appointed conveyance.

Mr. Macleod and Tim's father had gone ahead, on foot. Macleod hated horses, which he called an archaic and discredited form of transport; he admitted that he had never ridden in anything more exciting than a tram-car before he came to Chile, and any witness to his equestrian

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performances could readily understand his preference for something on four wheels and rails. Animals are great judges of character, and have a strong sense of humor; all the horses knew Mr. Macleod, and made him the butt of equine waggery. Even Don César, the General's superannuated charger, who served as a mount for little Gretchen's maiden efforts, could cut a caper or two for the tutor's benefit. Mr. Staveley, on his part, was a good though careless rider, but was torn between two difficulties. "When I am on horseback," he would observe, "I invariably see specimens of rare flowers which I wish to gather, and I cannot do this without annoying my horse and inflicting maddening delays on the rest of the party. If I go on foot, I am too tired to care a curse about any flower. It is really very difficult."

So he had no preference one way or the other, and would use Shank's mare with great readiness if he could find a congenial companion.

The party consisted, therefore, of the General, Captain Gonzalez, Max, and the three boys, all mounted; the first *coche,* containing the Señora, Mrs. Staveley, and little Gretchen; and the second, in which went Tim's Aunt Olga, the baby Elsa, and her nurse—fortunately for the horses, not old Ana, who had passed on to a happier land, where, no doubt, she sits on a golden curbstone with a cherub on her lap, and is troubled no more by perambulators. It was necessary for the Señora to travel under escort, for otherwise the chances were that she would bolt back to the house, obsessed by horrid visions of open windows, running taps, and similar calamities. On this occasion she fell into a state of acute consternation regarding her keys, and after having almost upset the carriage in her efforts to locate them, she exhorted the driver, a fat man always known as El Guaton (which means He of the Big Belly, and offends no one), to turn his horses. But El Guaton, sure of Mrs. Staveley's moral support, merely chuckled fatly, and in the midst of rating him the Señora found the keys dangling from the fringe of her shawl. After

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this she abandoned her domestic apprehensions for a fresh set which concerned the horses, the wheels, the way Gretchen was leaning out, the loose cork of the milk bottle, and other similar matters.

Although the General's house was perched high, they were going higher, and the horses, of which there were four to each *coche,* wheezed and puffed as they walked up the slope. The track followed a zig-zag route to avoid the steepest inclines, and the cavaliers were soon lost to view, to the horror of the old lady, who imagined they were being left behind; but the horsemen eventually came up from the rear, having merely stopped to admire the view. So, having reached the top by this time, a halt was made to breathe the horses, and to admire the view likewise; and a wonderful sight it was, that great sweep of blue water, with the big liners looking like toy ships with their infinitesimal swarm of pin-head row-boats about them in the harbor fifteen hundred feet below, and the Andes, on which there was still much snow, rising in rank upon rank behind.

There were other wayfarers upon the road, a motley and a cheerful lot. Going townwards and bound for Playa Ancha, where there was to be a military review, a *rodeo,* and all manner of diversions, came the countrymen, in brilliant *ponchos* and tasseled hats, with carved wooden stirrups, high-peaked saddles, and spurs with silver rowels three inches long. With them, pillion and side-saddle, rode their smiling womenkind, and toddlers who could scarcely have been sure of their feet straddled a pony too, with a rope round its neck to keep it close to the parental mount. All these holiday-makers gave the time of day in the pleasant fashion of a time when, if you trespassed on private land, the owner as like as not vindicated his outraged rights by inviting you to lunch. The General eyed them with especial benevolence, like a 'busman on holiday; it was the first time in many years that he was not participating in the ceremonial they were going to see, for he had only recently gone on to the retired list.

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Going the other way were other travelers of a different sort; elderly merchants on horseback, shaking up their fatty livers, who had come out to Chile in the 'seventies with sidewhiskers and still believed them to be in the fashion; young Englishmen afoot, in untidy tweeds and smoking bull-dog pipes, intent on the broad beaches behind the headland which shelters Valparaiso, to bathe, lunch, and laze out the day; parties of young Germans, with blonde close-cropped heads and *rücksack* on back, and their sisters with long pigtails, looking as if they had come straight from under Black Forest firs. Sometimes these parties, youths and maidens, would lift their voices in tuneful German harmony, and the General's party, who knew the tunes as well as any, would join in too.

The Silver Lake, towards which they traveled thus agreeably, was a pretty spot; a small oval of placid water, with overhanging trees and patches of green turf running down to the edge. Above it on a little knoll were a *rancho* and a single ragged pine, which stood out against the sky like a Japanese print, and there one could buy eggs, corn on the cob in season, and clandestine and unlicensed beer. The *ranchero* was a friendly man, who knew the General well, and made the party free of his two-roomed hut and all that was his. Sitting on a bench at his door, as the cavalcade came up, could be discerned the two pedestrians, surrounded by an array of empty bottles.

"There is something familiar about their faces, Macleod, is there not?" remarked Mr. Staveley, coming up to the descending travelers. "Can they be our long-lost relatives? I can understand just how Livingstone felt when he saw Stanley. We've been here for hours. The birds have been hovering impatiently round with leaves in their mouths, waiting to cover us up, and I don't like the look in Macleod's eye. It has a cannibalistic glare."

"You do not know what it is, Carlos, to have a house to look after," replied the Señora, endeavoring to justify, and thus admitting, her culpability.

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Mr. Staveley cocked an eye at her. "I understand!" he said meaningly. "Well, so long as you have looked after the lunch as well, all shall be forgiven. Now what about it? Because, though I hate to go on stressing the point, Macleod and I walked."

It was already late, and the meal took a little time to prepare, so that when they sat down everybody was more than ready for it. Perhaps Tim ate a little too much, or a little too quickly, or both. He certainly felt a sensation of ponderosity when the *almuerzo* was over.

The ordinary routine would have included a bathe before lunch, but, as this had perforce been omitted, opinion was divided regarding the advisability of bathing. The children would have been quite ready to jump in with their mouths still full, if they had been allowed; Mr. Staveley, on the other hand, avowed himself plethoric with food, and scouted the idea, even after due lapse of time. None of the grown-ups were very keen; in the end they decided against it, and the men strolled away in a body to a point at a little distance, where a view of the sea could be obtained which might encourage the consumption of cigars and the processes of digestion. As they departed, they straitly enjoined upon the boys that they must by no means enter the water for another hour at least.

The three boys, after kicking their heels about the lake-shore for what seemed a considerable period, turned their steps by unanimous and telepathic accord towards a shingly stretch of beach, free of bushes or mud, at some little distance from the luncheon place, which, as they knew from previous experience, was the best place for bathing. "What's the time?" asked Kurt, leader by virtue of seniority.

Fritz had no watch; nor had Tim.

"That's a nuisance," said Kurt. "What time did we finish *almuerzo?*"

Neither of them knew that. "Do you feel full of lunch still?" inquired Kurt.

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His following denied any consciousness of their stomachs, though not very heartily as far as Tim was concerned.

"I don't either; still, grandad said an hour," observed the conscientious Kurt. "It must be quite that now, but we'd better hang about a bit in case."

He resolutely turned his back on the pond, and it must have been quite five minutes before they yielded anew to its lure. But the water lapped against the shingle in a succession of tiny ripples, each one a caress and an invitation. The surface reflected the blue of the sky above; the afternoon was drowsy with heat, and a water-fowl cruised in and out of the bushes on the further side. It was impossible to withstand it for long; the boys tore off their clothes and plunged in.

Kurt and Fritz began to skylark and duck one another. Tim, being a much inferior swimmer, preferred their room to their company while this was going on, and edged out towards the center of the pond. He floated luxuriously on his back and paddled with his hands. He could now see round the corner of the promontory or bluff which cut off the camping place from the little beach; there was nothing stirring; his grandmother sat under a tree, propped up by cushions, and meditated or slept. The party which had gone to enjoy the sea view had not returned. A thin ribbon of smoke rose from the dwindling fire straight into the afternoon air.

He rotated on his axis; the splutterings and gigglings of Kurt and Fritz were now behind him, the camp on his right hand. Between his feet he could see the bushes, hanging low in the water from the opposite bank. There was the water-hen again; Tim watched her, at first idly, then with increasing interest. She seemed to be hanging about that part of the bank a good deal; perhaps there was a nest or a clutch of water-chicks. His father would be interested if that were so; Tim was not sure, but he believed that he had his camera with him.

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Turning over on his stomach, Tim went to investigate at a leisurely breast-stroke.

Now his going swimming at all that afternoon had been a piece of deliberate folly. He had been conscious, after the late lunch, of having "done himself" over-well; he had been conscious of it, in only slightly lesser degree, at the very moment when he was assuring Kurt that he was not, but he had refused to allow himself to be aware of it. He had noticed a heavy feeling when he entered the water, and though he sometimes forgot it in the pleasure of the moment, it reasserted itself from time to time. Thus he had only himself to blame for what occurred.

Tim was well over towards the farther shore, still intent upon the water-hen, when an excruciating attack of cramp took him in the pit of the stomach. Quite involuntarily he lifted his knees, and his face went under water, smothering his cry of alarm.

He was not down very long—his full lungs brought him up again—and he found himself incomprehensibly facing an unfamiliar shore; then he realized that he must have turned round under water. He twisted his head to shout for help. Fritz and Kurt had their backs towards him; Kurt was chasing Fritz, and they splashed through the shallows and ran into the undergrowth, shouting with laughter. Tim opened his mouth to call to them, and a wavelet took him in the thorax and went down his throat and up the passages of the nose, effectually choking him. Then he was seized once more by a cruel and relentless grip round the middle, as if a mighty hand were compressing his vitals.

He stayed down longer that time, and came up very far gone, threshing the water with the instinctive automatic violence of the drowning. As his head broke surface and he gasped for a frantic lungful of air, the image of the shore was flashed upon his retina like an instantaneous photograph. He saw, on the top of the bluff, Kurt's naked figure, his hand on a tree-trunk and his gaze quartering the surface of the pond. It must have

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been a momentary pose, but it seemed to Tim to last for aeons. Then Kurt's figure came to life, his hand jerked up in a gesture of discovery, and he sprang over the edge of the bluff, a good thirty feet, in a majestic header.

So much Tim saw before he went down into a dome of effervescing green, which twisted and whirled around him in a dazzle of emerald. Abruptly the iron hand about his middle relaxed and fell away; he lost the agonizing desire to struggle, and could not feel his body and its limitations any more. He was merely an intelligence, a sort of amorphous tadpole of animation, rotating rapidly in a bubble of eglomerate spun-green threads. Anon this glassy phantasy was shot with arabesques of red and purple, and he was aware of another sensation, sound; a sort of intermittent crackling, and a long continuous note, thin and high, like the buzz of a giant mosquito. His past life did not flash before him; he had no coherent thoughts at all. He was not conscious of any pressure, and the sensation of drowning, once it had destroyed the instinct for self-preservation, was by no means unpleasant. Death in that form takes you to his arms like a lover.

But he was not allowed to rest in peace. Rude thumpings and bangings broke in upon his euthanasia; he began to be conscious—angrily conscious—of his body again. Why could they not leave him alone? He was sensible of a splitting pain in his head, when a moment before he had not possessed an entity, much less a head. There was a jangling as of a dozen belfries. Somebody was pulling his arms. A voice said, distantly: "Look! His lips moved."

Tim felt a horrible reluctance to open his eyes. All his comfort was gone. The voice said, much nearer this time: "Thank God! Now the rug, please!"

He opened his eyes, groaned, and closed them again. He felt more dead than alive, but was undoubtedly alive. Captain Gonzalez, in his shirt-sleeves, slipped a pillow of some sort from behind the small of Tim's back to beneath

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his head. The Captain was dripping with perspiration, as if he had just completed some violent physical exercise.

Tim became aware of a rhythmical friction, and opened his eyes again to locate it. His father was rubbing his feet; he stopped to exchange a brief exultant handshake with the white-faced Macleod, and then went on rubbing. His grandmother was in the act of giving a cup of tea to Kurt, who was sitting half-dressed against a tree and shivering violently. The rest of the party were fetching and carrying, with faces on which anxiety was giving place to satisfaction. So much Tim saw before relapsing into semi-consciousness which lasted until the following day; he retained the dimmest of memories of the intervening night, and of the return of the rather subdued party of holiday-makers into the festive town, where fire balloons were ascending to the skies, and every *rancho* echoed to the beat of the *cueca*.

Tim had been unconscious for forty-five minutes. Kurt had dived seven times to get him, beating all his previous records for under-water swimming. When the rest of the party returned from their stroll, they arrived to find the panic-stricken Fritz towing them both ashore.

That was how Tim's life was saved by his cousin, Kurt Axel Hardt von Schulenberg.

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## CHAPTER V

### *THE SECOND POUNCE*

THE following summer was a particularly hot one, and owing to some freak of nature the south winds ceased to blow early in the autumn. There was a record show of peonies in the General's garden, owing to the absence of the gales which usually destroyed the blooms. At first everybody enjoyed the unwonted tranquillity, but as the unchanging torridness of the days—and, what was more unusual, the nights—went on, they began to yearn for a good brisk breeze to clear away the stale airs and heavy hot exhalations of the stagnant town, shut in by its amphitheater of hills.

In those days—and things are not very different even now—the Chilian lower orders, both in town and country, depended almost entirely on nature in matters of hygiene. They lived in one-roomed huts with their pigs and chickens where space permitted, and otherwise in teeming tenement buildings; they got rid of their refuse by hurling it out of the front door, relying on the wind and rain to blow or wash it away. But when, in the dry season, the usual wind declined to blow, the dividends from these haphazard investments began to come in. Child mortality was consistently heavy, of course; the demon of disease was always lurking in the foul stews and crowded by-lanes of the town, and sat an unseen guest at every humble table in Valparaiso, putting a sort of Black Blessing upon the meal. He only needed a little encouragement, a little extra warmth for his hot-beds and forcing houses, to develop some very diabolical gardening indeed. In that abnormally hot autumn, after the long baking of the summer months, came the necessary stimulus to this



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husbandry, resulting in a crop of the most unholy fruit. That year—the Year of the *Peste*—will not be easily forgotten by the survivors.

The first intimation that Tim had of anything amiss came in the transplantation of his father's *ménage,* bag, baggage, and the young baggages, as Mr. Staveley put it, to the General's more salubriously situated establishment in Calle Hospital. Once there, he was included in the edict which had been promulgated in the case of the other children, forbidding walks in any direction except up hill, on to the bare slopes above the town. Altogether a novel and exciting business.

A few days later came another portent, in the jovial form of an old friend, Dr. Kuhn, who, instead of putting a thermometer into the mouth of the person concerned and telling a funny story, spread out an array of little knives and vials on the dining-room table. "Now we are ready," he remarked. "Who will be first?"

The General was vaccinated first to set an example, and one by one all the family and domestic staff, down to the babies, were similarly dealt with.

"Just a little cut—so! And a little dab—so! Do not rub it off," said Dr. Kuhn, working with quick fingers—he was getting a lot of practice just then. "Now you are safe from *La Viruela.*"

Most of them were not safe from very sore arms, however, and the household was extremely grumpy in consequence for several days. Tim did not take, and was an object of much envy.

His daily routine went on as usual. Mr. Macleod occupied his time for a regular period each day, and although the servants gossiped a good deal about the sickness in the town, he took very little notice of them, and thought nothing of the matter. One Sunday morning, however, when he went up the hill for a walk with his father, he noticed a large makeshift white flag hanging from the roof of one of the few huts which straggled between the General's house and the open hillside.

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"Hullo!" he remarked, stopping in idle curiosity. "What's that for?"

"Quick march!" said Mr. Staveley, taking his son's arm and increasing his speed. "That's for the ambulance. They've got small-pox in that house."

They came back by a devious route, so as to avoid passing the place, and entered the Calle Hospital by a side lane just below their own door. Tim was turning the corner as usual when his father, glancing up the hill, drew him back, and they retraced their steps a few paces and waited.

A cart passed the end of the alley, an ordinary market cart with a sort of rough tilt extemporized over the body. Attached to the lamp bracket it bore a yellow pennant, and there was a strong smell of some crude disinfectant. From within the hood, and so loud that it rose above the rattle of the wheels on the cobbles, came a sound of giggling laughter, which for some reason sounded unspeakably horrible to Tim, and froze his very blood. As the ambulance jolted away it lifted to a *crescendo* of crazy yells.

Mr. Staveley said no word, but he was unmistakably shocked, and they returned to the house in silence. Tim went through into the garden, seeking to recover his equilibrium in the every-day scene, but he was no sooner on the top terrace than his newly-opened eyes found another horror in the familiar prospect. Here and there amongst the houses below he caught the gleam of white.

"Father!" he cried, rushing back into the *patio*. "Those white flags! You can see them hanging out all over the town!"

"I know," replied Mr. Staveley, without any of his usual buoyancy. "There's a fresh crop every morning. Don't say anything to the others, that's a good chap."

Tim said nothing, but he dreamed that night, until he woke sweating, of white flags and that horrible death-cart.

Day followed leaden day, with no signs of a break in

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the weather. Actual experiences of the pestilence began to creep in upon the household. Francisca, the cook, lost her mother, and one of the housemaids, going home one afternoon, found that the dreaded visitor had arrived before her. She was not allowed to return, and took up her quarters in Mr. Staveley's empty house on the Cerro Alegre. The whole place reeked with the fumes of sulphur from the little room which had been set aside as a fumigatory, where the laundry underwent a prolonged subjection to the yellow candles. All visitors were strictly supervised, and the itinerant vendors of game and vegetables who had sometimes supplied the house were turned from the doors.

Every morning the *Mercurio* published the news of the campaign, as if Valparaiso had been a beleaguered city. In this emergency the mercantile community, people whom Tim, with the unthinking intolerance of youth, had rather despised for being unlike his father and grandfather, entered into the battle, and right manfully they acquitted themselves. The municipality, a crazy political machine, which never functioned to much effect at the best of times and was, moreover, hampered by a complete lack of cash and credit, found itself hopelessly unable to rise to the emergency. It remained for the merchants to form a Small-pox Committee, to supply money for disinfectants and doctoring, and to set about the provision of a multitude of rough wooden coffins. All day long the ambulances rolled through the streets, carrying off the stricken to the *lazaretto* at Playa Ancha, a bourne from which very few travelers returned. Indeed, the relatives of the sojourners at that grim hostel mourned them as if they had been already dead.

There was a great deal of self-sacrifice in most unexpected quarters, and many sound preventive measures were undertaken, but it is impossible to overcome, by vaccination and the sprinkling of chloride of lime, the results of generations of hygienic neglect. The disease leapt like a conflagration over the puny defenses, and for every

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place where it was stamped out sprang up anew in half-a-dozen more. It did not make very great headway amongst the better classes, who lived under decent conditions and had an intelligent understanding of the precautions necessary to the occasion. But there was no curing the fecklessness of the lower order, for whom the foci of infection seemed to hold a perverse fascination which cost them dear indeed.

"What can you do in such a town?" lamented Dr. Kuhn, with whom Mr. Staveley had a few moments' converse from the other side of the street, as he went down to his house for a little rest. His working day lasted about eighteen hours at this time, and all his rubicund jollity was gone. "The paper money alone is enough to spread all the plagues of Egypt."

It did not prevent him doing his best, however, nor many others like him. The British and German Hospitals, which were not allowed to take infectious cases, were almost deserted by their staffs, who transferred themselves voluntarily to the great overflow small-pox hospital. In many of the better-class houses the pestilence did not find a footing, but it did in some. It did in the General's. Probably it came to them through Celedon, the baker at the corner of the Calle Tubildad, who was smitten with all his family, and undoubtedly delivered something else besides the loaves to his many clients before he went down, though the sickness should not have been contagious at that stage. Perhaps it came in the flour, and Celedon and his customers were merely fellow-victims. The point is not likely to be cleared up, for he died, and so did his wife, and his aged mother, and three of his five children.

One morning, after Tim had finished his lessons, he was down in the orchard helping Fritz and Kurt to make a tail for a monster kite, which had just been presented to them by Brito, the General's orderly. There was no wind for kite-flying at the time, but they were preparing for the winter, when they usually did a lot of it. The summer winds were too strong, and broke the kite-strings.

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They had a basket full of colored spills of paper which they were knotting to a long string, amicably reviling one another when they fumbled. Tim was folding a pink slip, when to his surprise it seemed to spread out, and to cover his whole field of vision. At the same time he was conscious of a spasm of deadly nausea. He stood up unsteadily. As his sight cleared again he saw his mother descending the garden steps. "Mother," he said, "I'm feeling most dreadfully sick."

She stopped as if she had been struck, with such a look in her eyes as Tim had never before seen there. Then she came swiftly down to him and took him up in her arms.

The last thing he remembered seeing, as he lay on his bed in the grip of another wave of sickness, was the figure of his mother hanging a carbolic sheet over the door.

That night the weather broke. A gale of wind from the north-west brought with it rain, which swept the small-pox out of Valparaiso in torrents of sweet water.

. . . . . .

By rights Tim should have gone to the *lazaretto*. The fact that a serious case very often succumbed to the journey there was a minor point to the health authorities; they could not help it, and of two evils chose the lesser. The infectious cases had to be segregated somehow. But Dr. Kuhn stood Tim's friend; at the risk of criminal penalties he forbore to report the case, and by so doing undoubtedly saved his patient's life.

Small-pox is a loathsome disease, and Tim had it very badly. When his vaccination failed to take every one said it was because of his natural immunity, but if he was an unlikely subject then the likely ones must have had a poor chance. Afterwards he could only dimly remember the intervals in his delirium, and the foul sores of his complaint, and the black pigment they spread on his face. They had to tie his hands at one period to prevent his disfiguring himself. Much of the time he spent in the dark, for that is part of the treatment, and he could never

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smell bran again without being reminded of that sick-room, and its bran-poultices and bran-baths.

He was particularly tormented by the striking of the clocks, which tortured him in his delirium. Every time-piece in the house was stopped, but they could not prevent the town clocks from striking in the silence of the night, nor the ringing of the church bells, hammered by hand in the Chilian way, which seemed to jangle in the sufferer's very head.

His mother slept on a bed at his side, and nursed him throughout; except for Dr. Kuhn, nobody else entered the room. When he was well on the road to recovery, however, she resigned him to the care of a trained nurse from the German hospital. She looked worn out, and he could well believe it when he was told that his mother was confined to her bed, exhausted by so many consecutive nights and days of strain.

Tim came out of that room to a normal world again, a world without dead-carts and white flags, the inhabitants of which were already forgetting their recent peril in the facile way of mankind, and throwing their refuse about as if nothing had happened. He was white and shaky, but not otherwise the worse; his complexion thickened a little, but he was not marked, thanks to the care with which he had been nursed.

As soon as he was well enough he was whisked away to the Criadero Santa Marta, and the motherly care of Frau Neckelmann. It was a lovely late autumn, bright with golden and russet tints. Limache is closer to the mountains than Valparaiso, and in the mornings the garden would be jeweled with hoar-frost and crisp underfoot. The chrysanthemums were in full flower, and Chile is second only to Japan as a chrysanthemum country; they grew, red and brown and yellow, in a gorgeous array of blooms which would have far surpassed the prize specimens of other lands. The walnuts were barely collected, and Otto's pigs were still rooting for windfalls amongst the autumn leaves.

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Unlike most Chilean houses, the Neckelmann establishment boasted a fireplace, round which they used to sit in the evenings, with the firelight glinting on the darting needles in Frau Neckelmann's fingers and on the bowl of her husband's big porcelain pipe. The good couple were as tender and affectionate towards Tim as if he had been their own child, and cosseted him from the moment they brought him his *Kaffee* in the early mornings to the placing of the hot sand-bag in his bed at night. Sometimes he caught them looking at him almost with compassion, and though he could see no reason for such a manifestation of sympathy, he felt warmed towards them all the same.

He mended apace. He used to help Otto in the gardens amongst the saplings, and execute commissions for Frau Neckelmann on his pony at the neighboring farms and in the village of Limache. No one came to see him from Valparaiso, for the General's house was in strict quarantine, and remained so until it was certain that there was to be no further outbreak amongst its inmates.

Tim stayed with the Neckelmanns for more than a month, and at the end of that time was completely restored. One day his father arrived on the morning train to take him back to Valparaiso; Tim was just in from a ride, and saw the familiar figure in the veranda. He was off his horse and up the path in a minute, flushed with the glow of exercise in the crisp morning air.

Mr. Staveley looked pleased to see the boy in such health and spirits, but Tim found him oddly thin and worn. It struck him abruptly that his father was quite middle-aged, a thing that had never occurred to him before. "Why, father!" he cried. "What's up? *You* haven't been ill, have you?"

"I'm all right, old chap," replied Mr. Staveley. "Feeling fit again?"

"Rather!" said Tim with enthusiasm. "And I've been to a *rodeo,* and Otto's teaching me to rope a cow. How's every one? Is mother quite all right again?"

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For a moment Mr. Staveley did not speak, and in that instant Tim understood, by some telepathic flash of insight, his father's careworn appearance and the compassion of the Neckelmanns.

"Best to get it over, Tim," said Mr. Staveley at length. "Your mother caught the small-pox too, and died three weeks ago. There are only the two of us now, son."

He took the boy by the arm, and together they passed into the house.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *THE THIRD POUNCE*

AFTER the death of his wife Mr. Staveley closed up his own house and went to live permanently with his father-in-law, so that he might not be put to the expense and discomfort of running a widower's *ménage,* and might have a real home for his motherless child. As it was, Tim had been accustomed to spend most of his time at his grandfather's, and after a year or two the memory of the old house became as remote as a dream.

The sixteenth of August, 1906, was a very wet day, and Tim's birthday. There was a children's party to celebrate it which was only a partial success, for several of the invited guests, who lived at a distance, were unable to attend owing to the weather. The rest of them, however, did their best to make up for this default at tea-time and the visitors took leave, sticky but satisfied.

In view of the occasion Tim was allowed to sit up for dinner, which was held in consequence at half-past seven instead of at a quarter past eight, the usual hour. This was a providential thing in the light of subsequent events, for most of Valparaiso went dinnerless that night.

At a few minutes past eight Primitivo was serving the coffee—the General was poising the sugar-tongs over his cup—when Tim's hand, which was resting on the table, suddenly felt a strong throbbing vibration of the stout mahogany. He knew what it was immediately, for earthquake tremors are quite a common happening in Central Chile, and he waited with confidence for it to pass away, as such things had always done in his experience. But it did not pass away; instead there came a tremendous shock, as if the floor had been kicked from below by a giant, and



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the light went out immediately, leaving the room in inky darkness. In the second of silence that followed Tim distinctly heard the rain cease, as if it had been cut off with a tap; then there was a wild smashing of plates in the kitchen, pictures fell, ornaments were shattered, and plaster dropped from the walls all over the house.

Tim heard, above the yells of the domestics and the noise of falling masonry, the sound of the others getting up from their seats, and he jumped up too, immediately lost his bearings, and walked straight into the wall. The tall clock, staggering from its place in the corner, missed him by an inch and broke itself into pieces over the back of a chair. The door handle rattled as some one wrenched at it, and finally the door abandoned the embrace of the distorted frame, and came open. "Everybody this way," cried the General's voice. "Into the center of the *patio,* and stay there!"

The party poured pell-mell between the shaking veranda posts and stood ankle deep in the wet flower beds, while the fronds of the palm trees, agitated as if by a strong wind, dripped moisture upon them. The General emerged last, his white table napkin still in his hand, driving the kitchen-maids before him; they had adopted the soothing but not very practical measure of throwing their aprons over their heads. Even as they appeared there came a second heavy shake, and almost immediately in its wake a third so severe that it set everybody rocking on their feet.

Mr. Staveley and his brother-in-law, disregarding this, soon burst in the tightly jammed door of the night nursery, where Gretchen and Elsa could be heard howling with fright. The ground continued to oscillate violently, though without the intensity of the first three stupendous shakes. It was impossible to see what was happening in the Cimmerian gloom, for all the lights were extinguished and the glow of burning buildings had not yet had time to make itself felt; the crash of plaster and tiles, loosened shelves, and toppling furniture was the more alarming for

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the black cloak which enshrouded everything. The house itself, however, appeared to be standing up staunchly, and after a few moments the General ventured into his bedroom for his electric torch.

He returned cutting wedges of brilliancy through the blackness, and giving momentary glimpses of the most wholesale desolation. One end of the north veranda was down, a cascade of riven wood and sliding tiles. Nearly all the glass in the windows was gone; through the open door of the room that had just been vacated could be seen a haze of *adobe* dust, in which the overturned chairs, the dining table with its cloth dragged half off, and the floor littered with broken glass, plaster, and fallen pictures made a sorry contrast with the comfortable and ordered scene of a few short minutes before. Water was pouring in a steady stream down one wall onto the carpet. *"Lieber Gott!"* cried the General, noticing this. "That is the tank in the roof! We must at all costs save it. There is no knowing when we shall have water again; the mains must be broken in a hundred places."

So while Mr. Staveley went to forestall any possible conflagration from the scattered embers of the kitchen fire, Uncle Max and Primitivo climbed through a trap-door into the shaking *entretecho,* at no small risk from loose tiles, and propped up the tank, which had tilted over between the rafters. The others listened with anxiety to the muffled sound of their efforts. In due course, however, the beams of the electric torch disclosed Max's legs emerging safely from the square aperture and feeling about in search of a foot-hold. "Do be careful, Max," exhorted the Señora seriously. "Those are your best trousers."

This remark, so entirely characteristic of the old lady and so refreshingly normal in a crumbling world, was more efficacious in restoring jangled nerves than the strongest of stimulants. Mr. Staveley recovered from his laughter, and lit a cigar. "This is not exactly my idea of a cozy spot for an after-dinner smoke," he observed,

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stamping on the match. "But we must do our best with it. The house seems to be standing up; I vote we get some rugs and chairs, and make ourselves as comfortable as possible."

There was a general assent to this, and the men of the party, trampling amongst the wreckage, collected a variety of seats, bedding, and overcoats from the collapsed hat-rack, fortified with which the household settled itself in the dank and dripping *patio* and did its best to keep cheerful. "Is it not growing lighter?" remarked Aunt Olga. "I am beginning to see quite clearly. Perhaps the eyes get accustomed—"

"Look at the sky behind you," interrupted her husband.

*"Por dios!"* ejaculated Aunt Olga. "What a fire! It looks quite close."

"Probably far away enough," said the General. "And not one but many."

The tremors persisted, though with lessening force, all through the night, and nobody dared to go indoors for any length of time for fear a recrudescence of the earthquake should bring the roof down upon their heads. At about half past eleven, reassured by the apparent immunity of the building, they had almost made up their minds to risk it, and had begun to explore with cautious latitude, when there came a sudden roar of falling earth from the garden. Kurt, dispatched to reconnoiter, reported that half the upper terrace, and with it the concrete staircase, had collapsed, leaving a great scar which exposed in one part the foundations of the house. After that it was decided that it would be more prudent to await the dawn in the open.

Tim had confused and jumbled recollections of that night, impressions gathered through a mist of *adobe* dust, consternation, and utter fatigue, for remember he had been at a children's party in that distant past which was the afternoon. Certain incidents stood out in that jumbled nightmare; the smell of gas from the ruptured mains, until the pipes emptied themselves of their contents; the

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constant wail of *"Misericordia!"* from the street outside, as if lost souls were passing; the humorous lines about his father's mouth, appearing and disappearing in the glow of the cigar-butt; his grandmother, triumphantly carrying out of the devastated kitchen an intact sauce-boat, sole survivor of a dinner-service for twelve persons; little Elsa, who soon recovered from her fright and began to enjoy the whole business, singing in a shrill piping voice, to the accompaniment of collapsing bricks: *"Hop! Hop! Hop! Pferdchen lauf' galop!"* all this in intervals of uneasy sleep, one of a row of seated figures on the trampled flower-beds.

At about two o'clock in the morning looters tried to break in, having stolen up through a yawning gap in the orchard wall. They were rats, but not cornered rats, and fled at the sound of defensive measures.

There was no way of knowing what might be happening in other parts of the town, of course; the houses round, as far as could be seen by their outline against the lurid sky, appeared to have survived. Towards midnight Mr. Staveley and his brother-in-law adventured a short way down the Calle Hospital, and found a few refugees from the narrower streets of the English hill, who had sought the security of the less constricted thoroughfare. These they brought back with them, but their stories were of the vaguest. As the night wore on the General appointed sentries from among the men to keep watch, turn and turn about. Towards morning Tim fell into a really sound sleep wrapped in an Indian blanket which usually adorned the center of the hall floor.

. . . . . .

He awoke in the cold brightness of dawn, from a clammy dream of sleeping in damp sheets. His father, evidently on sentry-go, stood with his back to one of the veranda posts with his eyes shut, dozing on his feet. The gray stubble showed on his unshaven chin, and the thick *adobe* dust was caught in his eyebrows; his cheeks were smudged with dirt. Uncle Max slept huddled in a chair

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with his hands in his pockets, his ruined evening clothes, black with cobwebs and dust from the *entretecho,* covered by a large woolen blanket *poncho.* The two younger children were asleep in a perambulator; the Señora, that dignified and seemly dame, lay on a mattress amongst the trampled box, covered with a raffle of blankets, a frowsy-looking bundle. An English lady, one of the refugees, was wearing an old military greatcoat of the General's over a soaked and muddied satin evening frock. She was bare-headed, and her gray hair hung in strands about a grimy and tear-stained face; upon her feet she wore a pair of men's tennis shoes, many sizes too large for her. The servants lay or sat about with their mouths open. All were dirty, fatigued, hollow-eyed, and wretched. Only the General seemed in some subtle way to be in workmanlike trim, as was fitting in a veteran of so many campaigns.

"Hail, smiling morn!" remarked Mr. Staveley, nodding himself awake. "Wake up, everybody. It's daylight. Thank God it's going to be sunny later on."

The company, with many shudders and groans, came out of its uneasy slumber. It was a clear chilly morning and the storm clouds of the preceding night had entirely gone. The pillars of fire had turned to pillars of dense black smoke; the earth no longer trembled. The villa next door still stood, but there were great cracks traversing its white stucco, and a piece of its mansard roofing hung askew. A section of gutter-piping stood out from one corner at a ridiculous angle to the perpendicular, in imminent danger of coming down.

"Well, I don't know how the rest of you feel," remarked Mr. Staveley, rubbing his unshaven chin, "but I consider that the next thing should be a wash and brush-up."

"A brush-up, perhaps," corrected the General, "but a wash, not yet. Water is going to be precious, especially clean water."

"By Jove, yes!" agreed his son-in-law. "Stupid of me

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not to think of it. You are our commander-in-chief, sir. What are we to do first?"

"If you will all be good enough to stay where you are," replied the General, "I will examine the house, and see whether it will be safe for us to go in."

He crunched away over the *débris,* accompanied by Primitivo, and returned after a delay of perhaps five minutes. "The rooms overlooking the garden are distinctly unsafe," he remarked. "In fact, the outer wall is leaning over at an angle of thirty degrees, and you can put your arm through the gaps at the corners of the rooms. It is surprising that it has not come down. But the rooms on this side seem to be all right, and we can risk using them. The kitchen wing is impossible, I fear. The least shock would bring down the roof."

The party went indoors with considerable relief. The scattered chairs and overturned presses of the nursery were set in order again, and the servants made a bivouac fireplace in the *patio* under the General's supervision. Max ascended to the tank in the roof for water, and the Señora salvaged from the broken crocks and wrecked shelves of the *dispensa* the wherewithal for a meal. They had hot coffee, sardines, cold meat, and the last white bread that they were destined to see for many a long day.

It is remarkable what an ameliorating effect a full stomach has on the most disastrous of calamities. After breakfast all Tim's chill misery vanished, and he began to feel the most lively interest in his novel circumstances. The General did not give anybody an opportunity for idle exploration, however, and in no time at all Tim found himself carrying a bedroom jug, which in some extraordinary manner had escaped breakage, one of a water-party equipped with a miscellany of receptacles, from buckets to a two-handled Chinese vase. As the General remarked, an unknown quantity of water in a half-capsized tank was not going to last for ever, and could not be wasted in washing dishes.

"Try the Calle Estanque," he directed, "and if the

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tank has burst, you will have to go up the hill to a stream. *Gott sei dank,* it is the winter, and there will be plenty of water. And, Charles, one moment—" He disappeared into his bedroom, and returned with a short-barreled Colt revolver, which he handed to Mr. Staveley, who was to take charge of the party. "The police will no doubt be overworked this morning," he observed. "It is always as well to be prepared."

"I trust that any desperado who attacks us will be good enough to stand still while I take aim," said Tim's father, taking the weapon dubiously. "I would be more at home with a shot-gun or a blunderbuss. But I will do my best."

The water-party went out through the archway into what had been on the previous evening as well-kept a garden as any in Valparaiso. It was a sorry sight; a mere vestige of the upper terrace remained, and the second terrace was a wilderness of tumbled earth, from which protruded forlorn plants and rose bushes, their roots uppermost. A tangle of vines, broken timber, and crumbled concrete marked the site of the steps. They picked a gingerly way down this *moraine,* over the ankles in soft loam, to the vegetable garden; here half the wall was down, and they emerged through the gap into the road. The town below lay hidden in a dense pall of smoke, none of the neighbouring houses had collapsed, but all showed scars where balconies, porticos, and cornices had been dislodged. The General's dwelling, seen from below, seemed to perch precariously on the edge of a landslide, supported only by the mortar, with the very base of its foundations in the air.

Fortunately the reservoir in the Calle Estanque had not given way, and they obtained an ample supply of rainwater. There were several other dirty-looking waifs engaged upon the same errand, some of them rich merchants, who twenty-four hours before had walked the world with all its creature comforts at their command.

"'Morning, Sevenoaks," said Mr. Staveley to one man,

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who was filling a couple of buckets. "All well with you, I hope?"

"My own family's all right, thank God," replied the other. "But I rather fear that one of the maids was caught when our porch collapsed. We were all running out, and only just got clear. However, there's just a chance she may have panicked, and run off somewhere. It was so infernally dark. I hope the General and all the rest are safe?"

"Yes, thanks," replied Mr. Staveley. "The house is in a mess, though."

"Mess! You should see mine. However, I'm not worrying. Only too thankful to be alive."

The party arrived home without having any necessity to make use of its armament, to find the house rapidly approaching some sort of order. Furniture had been set on its legs, the fallen pictures stacked in corners, and all hands were sweeping up the scattered *débris*. The contents of the store-room and kitchen had been sorted, and the undamaged supplies removed to a safer place. The water-tank had been examined, and proved to contain about half of its normal two hundred gallons.

Tim put down his water-jug—which was not designed for porterage, and had made his wrists ache—and as there seemed to be no immediate call on his services (in fact he was rudely bidden to get out of the way) he went out into the garden to see what he could discover about occurrences in the outer world. He sauntered through the wrecked garden wall on to the Camino Cintura, and interrogated such of the passers-by as enjoyed his acquaintance, or had kind faces. All there were horrific but vague; they said that the whole city was destroyed, either by the earthquake or by fire. Tim became filled with a lively curiosity regarding what lay behind that screen of smoke below.

He stood for some time irresolute, peering down from his high position; but there was nothing to be seen except that dun-colored cloud, heavy in the windless air. He

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looked back at the house he had left; there was nobody to say him nay, and he decided to go a few hundred yards along the road, as far as the Calle Tubildad.

There was nothing very exciting on the way there, for the road was bordered on its inward side by gardens, which showed little signs of disturbance; its other side ran above the steep slopes of the hill. The Calle Tubildad, however, was in considerable disorder, though the houses were all standing and there had been no fires. The shopkeepers were out ruefully examining their shattered shop fronts, and there was a coming and going of people seeking friends and relatives who had become separated from them during the panic-stricken hours of the night.

There was nothing in the least formidable to deter the boy, and his increasing curiosity drew him further down the hill. The English Church and the German Hall and School were absolutely intact, but their vicinity commanded a glimpse of the town below, a tumbled vista of rubbish heaps and skeleton *façades*. There was a mighty fire in progress somewhere near, and skirmishing —always in a downward direction—to locate it, Tim soon found himself at the bottom of the descent. At the last turn of the winding street he came in sight of the blaze. It was a large hotel on the sea front; fire poured from all its windows in majestic fury, and no man hindered. He watched this for some time. . . .

After a while he bethought him of a family with whom his own was friendly, whose home was quite close to where he stood. It occurred to him that a visit to these people would round off his expedition, and he turned that way. The house of these friends had been one of several in the old Spanish style, which stood in a street at the foot of the bluff whereon was situated the Foreign Cemetery. The retaining wall of this was down, and, as could be distantly seen from below, many of its occupants had achieved a premature and unwholesome resurrection. Tim's mind began to misgive him as he passed between the shells of the modern shops at the beginning of the

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street, and once beyond these he stopped appalled. The old Spanish houses were entirely gone; only heaps of rubbish remained, in which not even their outlines could be distinguished.

Tim had climbed into some ruins at the side of the road to obtain a better point of vantage, when he heard the noise of footsteps in the wreckage behind him. He turned to face a filthy and sinister ruffian, who regarded him in a way that sent a shiver up his spine. A moment before he had been too absorbed in his surroundings to think of the dangers which might be lurking there for himself; but now, too late, a host of unpleasant possibilities jostled in his mind. The evil-looking fellow looked cautiously from side to side, and, seeing nobody, took the boy by the throat and shook him. "Have you money?" he asked fiercely, swinging him to and fro.

Tim nodded denial—for he could not speak, the breath was shaken out of him—and his assailant let him go with such suddenness that he fell with violence, held paralyzed with the shock and fear of this sudden encounter. The ruffian regarded him cruelly for a moment, and then drew a knife, the curved soft-iron dagger of the Chilian peasantry. His intention was dreadfully obvious, but at that moment there came a smothered groaning from the ruins behind him; he turned at the sound, and scrambled away like some evil scavenging crab.

Tim had recovered some of his breath, and was clambering down in shaky haste, when he heard the tramp of many purposeful feet amongst the litter of the roadway. A long column of marines swung round the corner, and at their head, in naval uniform and leggings, with a scarf round his neck, Tim's old friend Captain Gonzalez. The boy was plunging joyfully forward to accost him, when from the ruin he had just quitted went up such a dreadful screech of agony as brought the whole column to a halt like one man. Captain Gonzalez said nothing, and took no notice of Tim whatever; he pointed with his cane, and a file of marines doubled into the ruins, emerg-

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ing in a moment with the boy's late assailant between them.

They had caught him literally red-handed; he had been seeking rings, and the method he had employed to accelerate their surrender was sickeningly obvious. Captain Gonzalez gestured slightly once more. The marines seemed to understand exactly what he meant, and thrust the robber upright against the wall, under the muzzles of half a dozen carbines.

Then the Captain turned to Tim, who scarcely recognized his familiar face in its set expression of severity. "Go home, you little fool!" he rapped out, glaring. "What business have you here? Run!"

Tim ran. As he went he heard a volley ring out behind him.

Such was his first and last effort to see the sights of the disaster. It was enough. He did not want any more.

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## CHAPTER VII

### *THE ORPHAN*

ONE hot midsummer day in the January of 1911 an informal board sat in the General's study and considered the destinies of Tim. The General, not so much ageing as mellowing with the years, sat sideways at his desk, a heavily carved and rather ugly German piece of furniture, and tapped a letter thoughtfully against the oak slide, scarred and pitted by many burns from cigars put down and forgotten. He had now been retired for nearly ten years, and in his civilian clothes looked more like the Iron Chancellor than ever. His son Max, in the bright blue and silver of a Comandente of Coraceros, leaned against the mantelpiece under the tarnished French eagle taken by the General at Sedan, puffing thoughtfully at a cigarette. Contre-Almirante Sir James Gonzalez—he had been made a Knight of the Victorian Order together with his chief, Admiral Gomez, for his services during the earthquake—lounged in a deep chair, polishing his eyeglass with a silk handkerchief. Mr. Macleod sat opposite to him, gazing fixedly at the General's presentation swords in their glass case.

More than four years had passed since the earthquake, which, like every human disaster however appalling, had been soon forgotten. Away below the wide windows stretched a vista of concrete and corrugated iron, the new Valparaiso, which, with the customary thoughtlessness of mankind, had been embellished with as many gargoyles, porticos, and overhanging balustrades as if the earth beneath had been as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar; for these upheavals being known to occur at intervals of about forty or fifty years, the philosophic Chilians were



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leaving posterity to look after its own head. (In many ways the great catastrophe had turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for though it destroyed much that was picturesque and antique, it also removed such a host of pestilential slums as the most advanced of sanitary reformers could not have got rid of in a hundred years.)

"I thought at first," observed the General, "that perhaps my knowledge of English had betrayed me, and that the impression I had received from this letter was not correct. But what you have said, Mr. Macleod, confirms me. This letter shows—it is—in fact, it is not what I consider to be the letter of a gentleman. No."

"Certainly it was not written by a very broad-minded person," admitted the tutor.

"Well, that is no doubt what I mean, though as to that I am not myself very clear," replied the General. "In my own country, when I was young, I was brought up to define these things very closely. With us, either a man was well-born or he was not. But I have seen much, and seeing brings understanding. I have come to adopt your English view of a gentleman, as you call it. When our dear Charles wished to marry my daughter, his own personal qualities were sufficient for me. Since he did not choose to talk of his family, I did not do so either. But now I begin to see why he did not. Charles was what I considered the type of an English gentleman, which I much admire. Do you not agree, Gonzalez?"

"Certainly," replied the Admiral, fitting his glass into his eye.

"But, on the other hand, the writer of this, his brother is a common person—a tradesman."

The best of men have their prejudices. The circle in which the General had passed his most impressionable years had regarded merchants very much as it regarded cows—as worthy and necessary creatures, but not of the same genus at all; the General's own experience of the breed had been largely amongst army contractors, and was not likely to have raised the status of commerce in

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his eyes. "He says here," continued the General, turning the sheets: " 'We were of course aware that my brother had married in South America, but owing to his behavior to his father there was no communication between him and us, and so we had not heard that there was a child. My wife and I are naturally not very eager to allow a young South American boy, who has no doubt got very different ideas about things to what are thought right here, to join our family and mix with our children—' "

"But this is insulting!" cried Max.

"Wait! Where was I? Oh, yes. '—with our children, especially since I am now a preacher at our Chapel and in fact the principal member of it, and as such have to set a strict example.' He is obviously proud of that, whatever it may signify. What does it mean?" asked the General, turning to Macleod, who had been much edified by this remarkable epistle. The thickheaded narrowness of the writer and the broad cosmopolitanism of the General and the Admiral simply would not mix; that anybody could be so stupidly, unnecessarily ill-bred on paper seemed to them so inconceivable that, as the General said, he wondered if he had read it aright. Mr. Macleod, however, coming from a strict religious family in a Scottish industrial district, was under no such disability. He could visualize Tim's Uncle Tom fairly well.

"I'm afraid I couldn't explain it very well, sir. It's like being a pastor in your Lutheran church, but with a number of differences," he replied.

"*So?* But how can an iron merchant be a pastor?" inquired the General, much puzzled. "However, no matter. 'Nevertheless we recognize our duty in the matter. I will take charge of my nephew, therefore, and see that he gets a sound education, and if he turns out well enough might even take him into the foundry in due course, so that he may have an opportunity of reaching the position which his father might have had if he had behaved otherwise.' *Allmächtiger Gott!* This person seems to think

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that it is a disgrace to have a brother who was of international repute!"

It was a fact, of course, that the worthy Mr. Tom Staveley, who was "reet Staffordshire" like his father, had not at that time come to a full appreciation of the respect in which his late younger brother was held by the world at large. He never was brought to a full understanding or avowal, for he was a stubborn man; but in course of time it was borne in upon him that his private opinion of his brother did not tally with other people's, and that it was better suppressed. But this was after the publication of Professor Foxley's book, and the erection of the memorial tablet at the Botanical Gardens in Regent's Park. When he first heard of his orphaned nephew, his only sentiments were those of consternation and annoyance. He was proud of being "reet Staffordshire," a hearty, no-nonsense-or-frills sort, and at home, in spite of his piety, he used language which was refreshingly candid; he said to his wife: "Charlie's married some goodness-knows-which in South America, and now there's a kid on our hands. I hope he did marry her, that's all; these South Americans are an immoral lot. Why, the brat may even be a Papist!"

" 'I see from your letter that my brother has appointed yourself and a Mr. Gonzalez as trustees for the boy's money, and I must say that considering that this is family money I think that he might have forgotten his quarrel with his own flesh and blood at least over that. Of course I will be ready to pay the charges for education and so on—' The extraordinary thing is," said the General, looking up from the letter, "that the creature is evidently quite wealthy. '—but I hope, as the solicitors in London will no doubt be seeing to things, that you will give me full particulars when the boy comes home, so that I may make sure that they look after his money properly. Living as you do in a foreign country it will be difficult for you to control such things from there.' "

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Max uttered an ejaculation, and flung his cigarette-end into the fireplace. "Charles' London solicitors are first class people, and this man must know it perfectly well. If I am not mistaken, they are the family solicitors," he observed. "What he means is that he would like to be sure that you, my dear papa, and you, Admiral, are not *stealing* Tim's money."

"That is the impression that I myself gathered," admitted the General. "And he addresses me as Mr. Hardt V. Schulenberg. I did at least suppose that— He cannot even have read what the newspapers said about Charles. Most of them mentioned us by name. But what an extraordinary letter, is it not? It is difficult to believe that any one could be so unnecessarily rude and stupid. And it is such people as this who have built up the great British commerce!"

"Scarcely that, I expect," said Max. "In such a prosperous country people must become wealthy in spite of themselves."

It must be admitted that Mr. Tom Staveley was not greatly endowed with brains, but he had a tough epidermis and was as pig-headed as a mule, which was a perfectly adequate commercial equipment for the times in which he had been brought up, when England still had everything her own way in the markets of the world, trades unions were in their infancy, and the coal pits were not so deep as they are now. At the same time he was not such a fool as his letter made him appear. To begin with, he had had no idea that the person who signed himself in a small foreign hand "H. Hardt v. Schulenberg" was the father of his brother's wife, or to do him justice he would have refrained from adverting to the disparagement of the latter's matrimonial connection. Nor had he the least comprehension of the eminence of his correspondent, nor of that of the co-trustee, to whom the General had alluded rather instinctly in his Teutonic script as "Admr. Gonzalez." Mr. Tom Staveley had got it firmly into his head that his brother had gone to the dogs, and once a notion

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gets into the skull of a man who prides himself on being hard-headed it takes a deal of getting out again. Thus the correspondence had been at cross-purposes; the General had been considering the disposition of the brilliant son of a celebrity, and the iron-master that of his despised brother's inconvenient offspring, whom he pictured as saddle-colored, kinky-haired, and generally "foreign."

"Well, one thing is certain," observed the Admiral, poising his delicate finger-tips before him. "We cannot hand our Tim over to this *cura* who owns a *fundicion*. The idea is preposterous. I cannot see him becoming a provincial tradesman in England."

"Indeed no," agreed Macleod eagerly. "He is one of the most brilliant boys I ever encountered. He might become anything, if he is properly handled—a great scholar certainly, or perhaps a great painter, though of that I am a less competent judge. But as a business man—" He shook his head.

"I take it that we are all agreed, then," continued the Admiral, "that this person must be told that his offer is refused. Fortunately the boy is entirely under our joint guardianship, General."

"Yes, that is very fortunate," said the General. "I only wrote to this uncle out of justice to the boy. I thought that it was only fair, since his nationality is not ours, that we should put him into the hands of his father's family. But, of course, I had no conception—"

"Quite so," observed the Admiral. "The next question is, what shall we do with him? Charles had certain plans, I believe. We ought to carry those out if possible."

"Yes. But there are certain difficulties with Charles—no longer here. The idea was that they were to have gone to England now, and Tim was to have passed this examination, whatever it may be—"

"The Public Schools Entrance," put in Mr. Macleod.

"That is it—and then entered this school of Rugby which his father had selected, and so gone on to a University in due course. Charles had intended to live at home

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for the next few years, so that they would have been together. But now, of course. . . . Where, for example, is he to go for the holidays? For Kurt at Heidelberg, and for Fritz also when he goes, that is easy. There is Schloss Schulenberg, and the good Herr Roepke in Hamburg and they will be amongst friends. But for Tim there is no one in England except this merchant of the provinces."

"And he is quite out of the question," said Max.

"So I think. A life of school with that as a background would not be enjoyable, to say the least of it. I do not believe in pampering children, but a boy of that age needs some one to whom he can turn in case of difficulty. Especially," added the General with grandfatherly pride, "a boy of whom great things are expected."

"I do not know why we are puzzling our brains so much," remarked the Admiral, slapping his knee. "The solution is plain enough. Kurt did not go home until he went to Heidelberg. Why should Tim? Let him stay here until he is ready for the University. You could continue to educate him, could you not, Macleod?"

"There is nothing that I should like better," admitted the tutor wistfully. "But I did not like to suggest it."

"Of course, there would be the difficulty about holidays when he goes to a University also," said Max thoughtfully. "But he would be older, and it would not matter so much."

"It would be an excellent arrangement," remarked the General. "The only misgiving I have is that by adopting it we are departing from his father's known intentions. I confess I do not see the force of it myself, but the English attach great importance to this public school training. Charles often used to speak of it."

"It is because it builds up character and gives self-reliance," explained Macleod. "More that than the actual education. They rub up against other boys."

"Tim has plenty of character," said the Admiral. "One must consider the particular career he is likely to

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have. If he were going to adopt my profession, or yours, General—"

"I expect great things of Tim, but I can hardly imagine him, with his paintings and books, as a soldier," put in the General with an affectionate smile.

"Exactly. He will no doubt choose some scholarly or artistic pursuit. My opinion is that individual care, such as our good friend here can give him, is by far the best in his case."

The General rose from his chair and stood at the window. Down below in the garden the unconscious subject of this conclave was seated at an easel, making a water-color sketch of his cousin Gretchen, now a leggy *backfisch* of twelve. Already he bore a strong likeness to Mr. Staveley; he had the same determined cast of countenance, but the ruggedness and bluntness of the father had been eliminated in the son, and a slender grace and delicacy substituted. Mr. Staveley had been brown-haired, too; Tim's hair was jet black, and in the summer he tanned as brown as a gypsy. The General could see the sure yet careful hand that wielded the brush, and the critical turn of the boy's head as he studied his subject. "Poor Tim!" he said. "Who would have thought, only ten years ago, when he was a little boy playing down there, that so much trouble was to come upon him? Why, it seems only the other day, and nothing has changed very much with the rest of us. There was the earthquake, of course, but what an incident that seems now." The General gave a reminiscent smile. "Do you remember, Max, how we camped out in these rooms, and dear Charles used to joke about bathing in his shaving water?"

"And the alarm of thieves at night," said Max, "when mamma threw both her boots at the ceiling, and one fell in the water-jug?"

The General's eyes twinkled. "Yes, indeed!" he replied. "And Tim's escapade in the town. Ah, well, poor boy, let us hope that his troubles are over. At least one cannot be made an orphan twice."

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"Also he is not entirely alone," remarked the Admiral.

"True. Everything that can be done for him will be done, and he will start life with every advantage. That is very satisfactory to think of," said the General comfortably.

Thus these four kind-hearted people did their best to settle the future of Tim, without any doubt of their capacity in that direction, and quite unaware that their proceedings were biased from the start by sub-conscious influences over which they had no control. They were all fond of Tim, and did not want to lose him; the General anticipated trouble from his wife if Tim were to go, and Macleod was no more desirous of giving him up than is a painter of surrendering a half-finished masterpiece. It will be understood, therefore, that their decision was fairly well assured beforehand. They would have done better if they had—but what is the use of talking? It is difficult to be wise, even after the event, in the matter of planning a career which has started at the end of Queen Victoria's reign, as most of us now know.

. . . . . .

It is time we had a look at Tim, now rising fourteen and developing very rapidly. At the age of thirteen a personality has gone a fair way towards being formed.

Tim had already strayed very far from the herd of British boyhood. Of course, he had so far not seen England but there is very little in that; there are many and many boys of the race who do not see England before they are fourteen, or at all, and yet turn out exactly like the rest. Tim's difference was fundamental; he was at once infinitely wiser and infinitely more innocent than most boys of his age. He had now a perfect mastery of English, German, Spanish, French, Latin, and Greek, and he could read Italian and even Portuguese with some facility; he had read widely in all these languages, being a singularly voracious, quick, and careless reader. Ordinary modern English fiction he swallowed in great gulps, getting through a novel in an hour or so. He could sketch

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with remarkable ability, and at this period was torn between literary and artistic ambitions; but while he took a deeper pleasure in reading than in drawing, he seemed to lack the creative instinct with the pen. He felt no musical urge whatever, and had no particular turn for mathematics, though he could pass muster at these well enough.

Against this formidable array of accomplishments must be set the fact that his more ordinary human side was somewhat atrophied. He knew nothing about experiences which are common to most boys; he had never swapped stamps, made himself sick on cheap sweets, been caned for getting up late, had a fight with another boy, or cheeked a master. Without being conscious of it he was a rather lonely child as far as other children went, for he was inclined to disparage his contemporaries, finding grown-up people infinitely more interesting. And there was another avenue of contact closed to him in his lack of interest in games.

He was fond of exercise, but quite devoid of that games instinct which is so widespread amongst the British. Many boys of light weight and slender physique have an aversion to games in which they act as ninepins to those of heavier build, and are readily classified by the aforesaid heavyweights; but Tim's indifference had nothing to do with that. If so far I have drawn what looks rather like a bookworm and a weakling let me correct this picture. Tim would skin his hands on saddlery or bruise his shins scrambling up a hill, or his shoulder with the butt of a gun, with the best will in the world, but he never could scrape up any interest at all in competing teams, either as a player or as a spectator. He simply did not care which side won, and the deadly earnestness with which such things were taken never ceased to astonish him. Cricket, for instance, he considered boredom unspeakable to watch, and when he played he never could prevent his active mind from discovering things going on over the hedge much more interesting to him than the weary monotony of six balls to the over. Tennis he liked

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well enough, and I think he would have enjoyed fives, if he could have had an opportunity of playing it; but in tennis again, he simply played for fun and with no idea of improving his game. Hart-court tennis is much played in Chile, and Fritz and Kurt had been very keen, getting up early in the mornings to practice at the house of friends (the General had no court) and endlessly striving to do better. Tim could never understand it. "It is only a game," he used to remark. "Even if in the end you become good enough to play for Chile, there will be thousands of people just as good in other countries." His cousins treated his logic with silent contempt. They were keen without knowing why, as your genuine athlete always is.

Although he found much interest in books and sketching, and would go a long way to see something novel or beautiful, most of all Tim loved *talk*—rich, fruity, stimulating conversation, which is one of the hardest things in the world to find; for so many people who like to hear their own voices have so very little to say, and others, who could be interesting if they chose, are just the ones who do not choose. But Tim was fortunate in this respect, for his own relatives could and did talk. His father had been a most brilliant conversationalist, and possessed the trick of making others join in. What Tim had loved beyond anything had been those long evenings in the winter, or those lazy after-lunch hours on country excursions, when Mr. Staveley, poking with a stick in the embers of the fire, would talk musingly of Tom Quad, and Pompeii, and the giant tortoise of the Galapagos Islands, and the difference between snakes and blind-worms, and why the Bolivians look like Japanese; and Uncle Max would chip in with yarns of Heidelberg and students' *corps,* and of service amongst the Araucanians of the south and the naked savages of the Land of Fire, while the General pointed saws and capped instances from the illimitable wealth of his experience, jumping from the Baltic to Peru, and from Austria to the Paris of the Commune. The General was

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slow to begin, but he warmed up as he proceeded, appearing to his audience sometimes as the white-haired general officer, sometimes as an impetuous young subaltern of cavalry, and sometimes as a child in a frilled collar, learning the broadsword exercise from his father, who had fought with Prince Blücher at Waterloo. The great Napoleon himself had spent two hours at Schloss Schulenberg on his way back from Moscow, and the General could repeat verbatim the stories of his childhood until the Man of Destiny, in his cocked hat and gray overcoat, seemed to swagger before his hearers in person.

Even Tim's grandmother could be absorbingly interesting, once she was away from her all-absorbing domestic affairs and could be kept to the point. She was the only one among them who sprang from the Chilian soil, and there was a warmth of color about her stories of the Chile of her childhood—when railways were unknown, and one traveled in ox-carts, paying the way with heavy dollars of silver so soft that they could be bent with the fingers—which made even the General's vivid anecdotes seem pale by comparison. She could tell of the lazy baronial life of the big estates, a patriarchal existence in the old sprawling red-tiled houses, when every passer-by was a guest, and could help himself from the bowl of small change always standing in the hall; of her grandfather, hereditary *grande* of Spain, who could wear his hat in the presence of royalty, but had surrendered that privilege (which, truth to tell, he had never had much opportunity of exercising) in support of what he had believed to be the right; of her Uncle Jaime, and his exploits under Cochrane in the Navy of Liberation; of the days when ladies never set foot to the ground outside their own gardens, and of Tim's great-great-grandfather's black slaves, and of the ebb and flow of the Mirales fortunes in the stormy years that followed the establishment of the new nation. Or she would drop into a more personal vein, and tell of her own girlhood; of her crinolines and little parasols which took six months to come from Paris, and

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her flower-embroidered silk shawls—heirlooms these, handed down from mother to daughter since the days when the Manila galleon brought such things once a year; of her triumphs as an eighteen-year-old beauty at the Court of St. James's in the late 'fifties. . . .

But after Mr. Staveley's death, of course, these good times were farther apart.

. . . . . .

Several months had passed since this tragic event, and Tim, busy with the delicate contours of Gretchen's face on the sketching-block before him, had worn the keen edge off his sorrow. Youth cannot mourn for ever. But it had taken time; at first his ear had ached intolerably for the sound of the familiar step and voice. The loss of his father had been much more to him than that of his mother; for one thing he was older, and latterly his father had come to be a friend as well as a parent.

After Mrs. Staveley's death father and son had been drawn much closer together, and Mr. Staveley used to like the boy to go out with him on Sundays, on long expeditions which as a rule lasted the whole day. Sometimes he would collect specimens for his herbarium, infecting Tim with some of his own enthusiasm for those nurseries of the great Master Gardener, the Chilian hills, in spring a riot of blossoms untouched by the hand of man. At other times he would scan some little valley or waterfall with reminiscent fondness, and fall into long silences, which the boy was sensible enough not to interrupt, for they understood each other very well; and once—though only once—he had given Tim a clew to his reveries.

They had been sitting on a large flat stone at the foot of a great palm, looking down a valley of feathery vegetation to the distant sea. "We came here once, your mother and I, when we were newly engaged," said Mr. Staveley suddenly. "I made a fire under this stone, and she brought water from the stream down there. It was a fine spring day, very like this."

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He fell silent again, and prodded his spur chain mechanically with his riding switch for a little time.

"There are some things in life that don't come twice, Tim," he said softly, and then changed the talk to other things.

There came another episode of these expeditions which was always particularly vivid in Tim's memory afterwards, for it alarmed him, and with good cause, as subsequent events proved.

They had been for a long trip across the hills, and had walked their animals nearly all morning up steep slopes with the sun hot on their backs. The horses enjoyed this no more than the riders, and were only too pleased when they rose at length to the watershed and could see the silver gleam of Lake Peñuelas, Valparaiso's reservoir, across the uplands. Here there is a fine level stretch of ground, ideal for riding, and the horses broke right willingly into a canter.

Tim was in advance, and he went flying across the plain with the wind singing in his ears, and no thought for anything except the exhilaration of the moment. After a while, however, as the first furious burst was slackening, it struck him that he could not hear the hoofbeats of his father's horse behind him. He glanced back once or twice, thinking to see the other emerge from some dip in the ground, but as the moments passed and there was no sign of him, Tim drew up and waited.

It took Tim very little time to realize that something must be wrong. He grew alarmed, and flogged his horse back at a quicker rate than he had come. He found his father dismounted, and sitting at the side of the road; his horse, the reins dangling in the orthodox Chilian way, was browsing near by. It was obvious that his father had not had a spill, as Tim had naturally feared. The boy jumped down. "What's happened, father?" he cried anxiously.

Mr. Staveley turned his face towards Tim; there was

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a blue look about the corners of his mouth. "Touch of the sun, I think," he said, in a dry husky whisper. "Go across to that *rancho* over there, and see if they have any *coñac,* will you?"

Tim went at top speed, and soon returned with the curious farmer, and, what was more to the point, with a bottle of raw two-dollar native brandy, the principal ingredient of which comes, not from the fruitful vine, but from the even more fruitful retorts of the sugar refiner. When they arrived Mr. Staveley was already looking much better, and after a draught of the stimulant which, as he remarked, could have been used to scale boilers, he professed himself sufficiently revived to go to the *ranchero's* cottage, where he sat in the shade of the *ramada* for half an hour.

At the end of this time he felt well enough to proceed, and after taking leave of their kindly hosts, and rewarding their progeny with small change (which the parents impounded before they had gone a hundred yards), father and son turned the horses towards home. Mr. Staveley made light of the affair, but Tim was not so easily reassured; he could not forget the ghastly color of his father's upturned face as he had ridden up. "You ought to see Kuhn, father, when you get back," he insisted.

"Nonsense! I feel perfectly all right now. It was the sun, or a touch of indigestion. Too many of those sardines at breakfast."

Tim was not satisfied, however, and took his grandfather into his confidence when he got home, and the upshot of it was that at length Mr. Staveley grumblingly consented to consult Dr. Kuhn. He returned looking serious.

"What is wrong?" asked the General in alarm.

"Heart, I'm afraid—valvular trouble. Kuhn says I must go slow, and risk no violent shocks. However, there's no cause for anxiety. He says I may live to be eighty with ordinary care. Lots of people do who have weak hearts."

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"You ought to give up roaming round the country by yourself, if that is the case," said the General.

Mr. Staveley's solitary prowls occupied a good deal of his time. "It won't do me any harm," he remarked. "Gentle exercise, you know. And Tim can't come with me always. He's got his work to do."

"The hills round here are too steep," protested the General.

"Not to a man who's as used to them as I am. Besides, I go up them like a beetle. Don't I, Tim?"

"You might have some accident."

"Pooh! What can possibly happen?"

"Amongst other things," remarked the General, "you might get into trouble with some bandit on these lonely hillsides. It happens often enough, as you know."

"Well, I've been doing it for nearly twenty years, and I've never been molested. Who is going to bother about the mad *ingles* with nothing in his pocket but weeds? I don't see why they should waylay me now, just because Kuhn says I have a dicky heart."

So he continued on his rambles, and indulged the taste for solitude which had grown upon him since the death of his wife, in spite of all advice to the contrary. "If my heart is going to give out it'll give out," he said. "If I stayed at home in cotton wool, I should probably slip on the steps or something of that sort. I shall take good care not to overtire myself, never worry about that."

For years nothing happened to prove him wrong, and his relatives began to forget their anxieties; then, when they had been entirely lulled into false security, he took the last of his rambles over the hills. He left early in the morning, to escape the heat of the day, and when evening fell he had not returned.

Tim had always known that his family was held in general esteem, but he never realized until this emergency the extent of his father's reputation, nor of his grandfather's powers and influence. As soon as apprehensions were aroused, and it was certain that some mischance had

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befallen Mr. Staveley, the General spent a busy half-hour at the telephone. Every scattered cavalry outpost for miles around received orders to search, and within two hours a whole battalion of the Maipo regiment was marching up through the back of the town, to spread out into an extended line three miles long, which began to beat in a great arc across the hills. Uncle Max and two squadrons of his regiment took part in the search, and a big reward was promised to the man who made the actual discovery. The government at Santiago heard of the occurrence, and telegraphed instructions for all the resources of the authorities to be placed at the General's disposal. Chile has her own men of letters, of course; but a foreign *savant* of reputation, living in the country and bringing it into constant touch with learned circles in other lands, was a rare guest, and one to be cherished.

The search went on all night, and a weary time they had of it. The lonely heights, where the one-roomed huts of squatters and herds were the only habitations, were lit up with twinkling points of flame from improvised torches, and from the fires which were built to enable the searchers to keep direction. Tim joined in, child though he was, and wore himself out floundering amongst bushes, with sick fear at his heart. Macleod went with him, and in spite of his frail physique, ill-suited for this kind of work, showed no signs of fatigue, at any rate to Tim. Without being foolishly optimistic, he was cheerful in a practical, level-headed way, and comforted the boy very much.

At about four o'clock came the day, for it was late in the summer. First, while all was still dark, came a vivid pink flush to the summits of the distant *cordillera*. Then the sky lightened, and they saw each other's faces white in the chill dusk, while the awakening birds began to squeak in the bushes. The voices of the toiling troops came echoing through the hush of the dawn. At five o'clock, or thereabouts, they found him.

As luck would have it Tim was not above half a mile away when the discovery was made. He heard the loud

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call of the trooper who first stumbled upon what they sought, and saw his pointing figure, upright upon the summit of a spur, in a clear relief against the morning sky. The man pointed down into the valley below him, in which the mists of dawn still hung heavy, and the searchers, from all along the ridge, began slowly to converge through the breast-deep scrub.

Mr. Staveley was sitting in a comfortable attitude, with his back to a rock. Something in the place seemed familiar to Tim, and as he approached he recognized the very rock and palm beside which, years before, Mr. Staveley had spoken of his wife and of their early days together.

The remains of Mr. Staveley's picnic meal, and his open *rücksack,* lay beside him, and a book, one of his many insect books, lay open on his knees, its plates wet with the dew. A cigar had smoldered away between his stiffened fingers.

He had died under the fair sky of summer, instantly and without pain. Although the book was open on his knees, he had not been reading when his end came. His face, which looked twenty years younger, was turned towards the little stream which tumbled down the valley at his feet; it wore an expression of joyful surprise, like that of one who welcomes back a person very dear, unexpectedly returned after long absence.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE BOLT FROM THE BLUE*

THE General was in contemplative mood that morning.

"We go in a circle," he said, folding his hands on his stick and gazing up at the snow-clad summit of the Bell. "When, instead of seventeen, as you will be in a week or so, you are seventy-seven like me, you will find it so, Tim. Do you know what grows more and more vivid to me as I get older? The days when I was a child. If you ask me of something that happened ten or twenty years ago, I may remember or I may not; but any detail of my life at Schulenberg in the 'forties I can give you at once. Old Pabst the head-keeper, who taught us boys to hunt; Minna the cook, Mademoiselle Lebrun, my sisters' French governess, and all the others—I can see their faces and hear their voices as if I had parted from them ten minutes ago, and most of them were in their graves before I was twenty-five. And my grandmother; she was a Frenchwoman, an *emigreé;* she had seen the Paris mob rush the palace at Versailles, and take away the king and queen. Think of that, Tim! A very old lady she was; it is hard to believe that I myself am older now. And a very great lady too; I was more in awe of her than I have ever been of any senior officer since. It seems only yesterday that she rapped my toes with her tall ebony cane because I did not open the door quickly enough. *Gott!* How brightly I see it all! Your pretty pictures are not more bright."

For some leisurely moments the General gave himself up to pleasant retrospection, stroking one drooping silver mustachio with his gloved hand. Tim, a lanky brown-faced stripling, began to take deft note of his expression



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for future use, on the fly-leaf of a novel. He had drawn and painted his grandfather ever since he had received his first box of colors, one Christmas morning long ago in the very house on the veranda of which they were now sitting in the winter sunshine; but he was never satisfied with his efforts, and was always striving for something better.

"It is for that reason," continued the General at length, "that I have taken to coming out here for little holidays in the winter. Perhaps you wondered why it was?"

"I never thought very much about it, sir," replied Tim, eyeing his sketch critically. "It's very nice out here in the winter. I don't know why we never thought of doing it before."

"It was the snow that bought me," said the General. "One never sees it in the port. Here we get a little—enough to remind me of the winters round Schulenberg. Those hills up the valley, when the snows lie on them, are not unlike—not unlike. But I wish that there were fir trees on them also. I miss the firs. It is home-sickness, I suppose. I am certainly getting old, Tim."

"If you feel like that about it, sir, why don't you go to live at home again?"

The General smiled a little wistfully. "At my age? No, no, Tim. The Schulenberg I remember is not the Schulenberg of to-day; the Schloss is the same, but there are factories at Dalldorf, our little country town, and the people have changed. In those days there was no German Empire, and the Grand Duke of Schwetz-Wittenberg had a little court of his own, diplomatic representatives and all—very gay and brilliant it seemed to us then, with distinguished vistors on the Grand Tour coming to pay their respects. The present Grand Duke, of course, lives in Berlin, and scarcely comes to Dalldorf twice a year. There were no railways then, and the peasants wore the old national dress. No, Dalldorf is not the little country town of my boyhood; that is a simpler and more kindly place, and only exists in the heads of a few old people like me."

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"I should like to see Schloss Schulenberg, all the same," said Tim.

"And so you shall, when we go to Europe next year. I hope that before we leave you at your University in England we will be able to collect Fritz, and Kurt also if his plans allow, and have a holiday all together again. I look forward to seeing Kurt. Let me see, it is three, no, four years almost, since he left us."

"He's done jolly well at Heidelberg."

"So I understand. I do not know very much about these academical distinctions, but I am sure he will make a success as an engineer. When Kurt was younger, Tim, I had hoped that he would be a soldier, for I always regretted, in a way, that your uncle never served in the German Army as I did. It was quite an ambition of mine—Kurt, I mean—and yet, you know, I find that it costs me nothing to give it up. Soldiers are an anachronism today, unless it is as police for the colonies, like your English army. I would not want Kurt to be a parade-ground officer, such as abound in Germany now—conceited young men with too much to say for themselves. When I was at home in 1908 I saw enough of them."

The General sat a trifle straighter in his chair, and his bushy eyebrows came together in a frown. He was firmly convinced that things had gone to bits since his day, a not uncommon frame of mind amongst forceful old gentlemen of seventy-seven. "When I was young it was different," he continued. "The Danes and Austrians and French sweated the fat off us, and made us men. That phase has passed; there has been no war in Europe since '70, and probably there will never be another—people are too civilized and well-educated, and the world has got beyond that sort of thing. It is better so. At the same time, a year's campaigning, with tight belts and heavy going, would do some of these over-fed youngsters good."

Otto Neckelmann came out of the house, the flowing folds of his *vicuna poncho* brushing the door posts, and halted with a jingle of his cart-wheel spurs. "I am going

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into Limache," he said. "Is there anything that you need from the town, Herr General?"

"Tobacco," replied the General, after a moment's thought. "A four ounce tin of the English Capstan. And also do not drop the newspaper in the road, as you did last time."

"*Ach! Nein,* Herr General. I am very sorry about that."

"It does not matter. Perhaps we are the better for going without a paper for a week. It is a more complete holiday."

"The political news always makes you angry, sir," said Tim.

"That is true. The country is in the hands of a set of bad rascals. If I had known in '91 what I know now, perhaps I would have fought upon the other side. Tobacco. Yes, that is all, Otto. Does the Señora want anything?"

The burly *administrador* extended his hands at arm's length with a comical grimace, and exchanged a look of privileged understanding with his employer. Then he lifted his hat and jingled away.

"Let me see," said the General, "what were we talking about?"

"About your going to live in Germany, sir."

"Ah, yes, of course. Well, as I was saying, it is folly to think that one can have one's youth over again, or recapture any part of it, by going to live in some particular place. One may like to be reminded—that is another thing. We have been very happy here, your grandmother and I, this thirty years, and it would be indeed foolish to think of changing all our ways for a sentimental whim. Besides, she is to be thought of; Germany is not her country."

"Kurt and Fritz and I would be living in Europe," remarked Tim, who was superficially attracted by the thought of moving the family to pastures new. "We could come and see you then, and that would be nice."

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"Yes. But that would be for a short time only. You are young men, and will have your own lives to lead. Here in Chile there are your uncle and aunt, and the two girls still children, and by the time they are ready to fly away, why, perhaps we shall have flown away too."

"Rubbish, grandad!" protested Tim.

"Seventy-seven this year, Tim, and I could not complain if I get no further," said the General with a chuckle. "I have carried *this* for nearly fifty years"—he touched the old scar of Königgratz in his thick white hair—"and I have been lucky in many ways. At my very first fight a shot—we used solid shot then—took away my sword and pocket, and even grazed my skin. Think of that! In the first ten minutes. Six inches to the left and there would have been no pleasant years in Chile. Life is an odd thing, and plays strange tricks."

The General fell silent for a few moments, and Tim wondered what memories were jostling behind his half-shut eyes. Would he, he cogitated, ever come to look back upon so much as the General? Probably not, he thought with mild regret; his life was cast in less stirring times, and along more prosaic lines.

"Yes, I have been lucky," the General's voice went on. "On the whole, I have much for which to thank God. We could not be more comfortable than we are here; and in the next few years you and Fritz and Kurt will all be starting happy and prosperous careers, and that is all that your grandmother and I really care about now, except for our little comforts, like the old fogies we are."

"Old fogies! You could walk me off my feet, and I'll bet grandmamma could dance a *cueca* to-day if she wanted to."

"Well, well, I am not so decrepit, it is true," agreed the General, not displeased. "At the same time, when one is nearing eighty, one no longer thinks of buying a new watch-chain, for instance." He cocked his head and listened. "Is that the telephone bell?"

Tim stood up and hurried into the house. He took

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down the receiver and listened to the thumping and bangings of the Chilian rural service. Infinitely remote, a voice reiterated with weary patience: "Al-lo! Al-lo!"

"Hallo!" responded Tim, and rang the bell to show that he was replying. "Hallo!"

"HALLO!" said the voice, suddenly and violently adjacent. "Is that the Criadero Santa Marta?"

"Hallo, Uncle Max! This is Tim."

"Ah, Tim. How are you all?" Uncle Max's voice was distorted by the long distance telephone, but Tim fancied that he sounded anxious. Did he suppose that somebody was ill? He had never troubled to telephone before.

"We are all very well, thanks."

"Good. I was rather afraid that your grandfather might be upset over all this. We have had a cable from Herr Roepke. Kurt and Fritz have been called up, of course; Kurt goes to the Engineers, and Fritz to the Infantry. The cable did not say to what units, nor where they are; I suppose the censor stopped that."

All this, delivered by such an indistinct medium, sounded the merest jargon to Tim. "I don't understand," he said.

There was a slight pause. Uncle Max was evidently troubled by the inadequacies of the telephone. "Kurt and Fritz have been mobilized," came his voice. "The war, you know."

"What war?" said Tim, thoroughly bewildered.

There was another pause—a longer one. "Haven't you seen the papers?" asked Uncle Max.

"Otto only gets a paper twice a week, and last Thursday he dropped it on the way home. He's gone to Limache to get one now."

Muffled ejaculations came from the other end of the wire. "Do you mean to say that you haven't heard about the declaration of war?" said Uncle Max incredulously.

"No. What war is it?" asked Tim, keenly interested.

The telephone plopped and fizzed, and Tim caught the

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latter end of a round curse. "Hello!" he called. *"No corte, señorita.* Are you there, Uncle Max?"

"You had better call my father to speak to me," said Uncle Max grimly.

"But I say—"

"Hurry!"

Obediently Tim went to the veranda. "It's Uncle Max," he said. "He wants to speak to you. He's saying something about a declaration of war in Germany. Do you know anything about it?"

The General rose from his seat. *"War?"* he echoed. "Impossible. You must have made a mistake." He strode into the house with his usual firm regimental step, and took up the receiver. "Max?" he called. "What is it?" Tim stood at the General's elbow in a state of frustrated curiosity, and began to pick up from his grandfather's fragmentary replies and ejaculations the news of what had been happening in the world during those peaceful rustic days. Russia had declared war on Austria, Germany on Russia, France on Germany; Italy was sitting on the fence, England, according to Max, was expected to stay out of it; all Europe was mobilizing. These were Tim's bald and incredible gleanings. He could not understand how these things had come about, nor, to judge by his incredulous exclamations, could his grandfather. The South American papers had given little prominence to the Serbian deadlock, and the swift bubbling up and boiling over of the international caldron had occurred since they had left town and become insulated in the depths of the Chilian countryside.

The General hung up the receiver at last with a hand that shook. "By George!" said Tim, not noticing his grandfather's agitation in his excitement. "What a business! I wonder if Kurt and Fritz will see any of the fun before it's over?"

"Fun!" echoed the General sternly. "Fun! Boy, you do not know of what you speak. I pray God you never may!" He went back to the veranda, and the sobered

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Tim saw that his tall erect figure seemed to have sagged indefinably in those few minutes. The General put both hands on the veranda rail, and stared over the peace and sweetness of the garden with unseeing eyes.

"I spoke too soon," he said, in a half whisper. "Gott I spoke too soon."

. . . . . .

In those first early days the inexperienced armies smashed and blundered with destructive agents whose potentialities nobody fully understood, and the great battle fleets, none of which had ever known battle, cautiously tested their theories, behind the dense veil with which the war authorities on both sides hastily shrouded their shortcomings, as a protection against the foe, and also—and to the professional warriors much more imperatively—against the critic at home. Behind this curtain the world at large remained a spectator; the collective mind had not at that stage come to view the struggle as one in which all humanity had a personal concern. Even that comparative few whose relatives were engaged in military or naval operations still looked upon the matter from a detached standpoint, and—so tenacious is the force of habit—were more thrilled than apprehensive. Tim and his aunt and cousins were chiefly engrossed in the novelty and interest of the adventures of Fritz and Kurt, whose photographs, in their unfamiliar uniforms, soon arrived, and while they would have said: "Of course!" to the suggestion that these doings were dangerous, they would not really have believed it. Their minds were simply incapable of taking it in; personal security had been for so long a matter of course. What the General and his son may have thought is another thing; but even they were a long way from the mentality of the later years of the war.

Behind this curtain of censorship, therefore, the German armies skirmished before Paris, the Russians lapped over into East Prussia, and the French into Alsace-Lorraine; the German colonies in Africa, China and the Pacific were invested; and the allied natives began slowly

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to comb the five seas for enemy cruisers and commerce destroyers. At times some civilian, accidentally involved, or wounded combatant would lift the hem of the veil and give his friends a fleeting glimpse of complicated and intricate but absorbingly interesting happenings with the armies or on the ocean. When, two months after the outbreak of war, the groping warships on the Pacific began to appear about the Chilian coast, chance brought one such eye-witness to the house in the Calle Hospital.

It was the little Señor Lopez, the *abogado,* who did the General's legal business—a formal dried-up little man in the ordinary way, but now shaken out of his usual dullness and garrulous with a great adventure. His story, shorn of excited exclamations and much repetition, was this:

He had just arrived by the Transandine Railway from Buenos Aires, where he had been on business. Thinking to combine this with a short sea-holiday, and never dreaming that any of these distant momentous happenings could intrude upon his own life, he had booked a passage by the English mailboat, the *Orgeta,* early in September.

The liner followed her scheduled course to the south of Chile, putting in at her usual ports in the easy fashion of so many years; the last of these dropped astern, and they headed still further southwards for the Magellan Straits. One day, as the little lawyer was enjoying an after-lunch cigar and a really magnificent view of the snow-bound coast of Tierra del Fuego, he noticed the smoke of a distant steamer on the northern skyline. This vessel drew rapidly up on them, and he saw the captain and several of the ship's officers examining her with close attention from the bridge. "What is that?" he asked idly —he spoke quite good English—accosting the fourth officer as he came down the promenade deck.

"Don't know," replied the latter, over his shoulder. "It's a warship. One of our light cruisers, the old man thinks."

But soon the captain evidently saw reason to change his opinion, for there came a sharp clang from the engine-

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room telegraph as the handle went over to full speed ahead. The ship began to hum and throb with the accelerated drive of the engines, and the passengers, coming out of smoke-room and saloon to discover the cause of this unusual prodigality of fuel, clustered at the rail and gazed with excited apprehension at the sinister silent pursuer, now plainly visible and gaining rapidly. The word went round, from some unknown source: "The *Dresden!*"

There were on board the *Orgeta* some three hundred French reservists, drawn from the Pacific coast from Arica to Punta Arenas. These saw their path to military glory in danger of an unexpected deviation; the deck was noisy with Gallic exclamations of dismay. There was a hurried discussion; a deputation held a short interview with the captain, and as a result a selected party of volunteers descended amidst cheers and snatches of the Marseillaise to the stokehold. Forthwith the orderly sound of the shovels from the boiler-room ventilators changed to a tremendous clangor, and the smokestacks began to give off thick clouds of solid-seeming greasy smoke.

Señor Lopez, too interested to consider how all this might affect himself, had forgotten his cigar, and was at the rail exchanging comments with his fellow-passengers. Suddenly there came a change of course which set them staggering, and at the same instant he heard the thud of a distant detonation across the waters. The captain had seen the flash of the gun, and had put the helm hard over.

This penetrated to the flustered wits of Lopez simultaneously with the scream of the shell, which plunged into the sea well astern, sending up a high column of foam. They were under fire. His heart missed a beat; the war ceased to be a topic of conversation, and became at one bound his paramount interest in life. He was badly frightened; a man of formal speech, he was surprised to find himself uttering startled blasphemies under his breath. He felt a sudden imperative desire to explain to somebody—anybody—that he was a neutral, and that this must stop. But these engrossed combatants—the grim intent cruiser, and

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the equally grim captain on the bridge, running for his ship—were so obviously beyond caring about neutrals. A devastating sense of indignant impotence gripped the Señor Lopez.

The group upon the deck, no longer chattering, waited with their hearts in their mouths for the shot to be repeated. But the change of course had brought a bank of smoke, thick and oily, rolling low upon the water between pursuer and pursued. The liner was going at a rate of knots that would have astonished her builders; red-hot sparks were pouring from her funnel. Another half mile, and the vessel zigzagged again. "Thank God for the smoke!" cried somebody.

Then abruptly the ship turned inshore towards a break in the rocky coastline, drawing clear away from the protective canopy. The battleship came in sight again, nearer —alarmingly nearer. There was another heavy thud and flash, and the shell screamed overhead. The groups on the deck executed that involuntary genuflection of the shelled; then the vessel shot between high walls of rock, and the telegraph rang at once for half speed. Soon a promontory cut them off from the open sea, and there was a roar of spontaneous cheering.

Señor Lopez comprehended vaguely, but with beatific relief, that everything was now all right, though how he did not understand. He expected to see the dark hull of the cruiser come round the headland at any moment. No doubt they intended to surrender. But apparently not; the ship's officers were grinning like schoolboys, and forward the watch was lowering a boat. The *Orgeta* was nearly stationary. He joined a party round one of the passengers, an old ship-captain, going home to Europe after many years on the West Coast service, who stood before the chart outside the smoke-room, indicating their position with a stubby forefinger. "Nelson's Straits, that's where we are," he was saying, with an admiring chuckle. "Good Lord! The old man's got guts; there hasn't been a ship through here in forty years. Ten to one

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we'll pile ourselves up. But they won't get us, that's one comfort. Catch 'em risking themselves in a nest of reefs like this for one old mail steamer."

Then Señor Lopez understood. He admired the captain for his courage, but he did not feel happy until, after much careful sounding and exploration by means of the boats, they had felt their way safely out to the Atlantic.

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## CHAPTER IX

### *THE ADMIRAL WHO PICKED FLOWERS*

ONE morning, shortly after Señor Lopez had lifted the war from the category of newspaper topics, and brought it home to Tim as a potential factor in anybody's life, Macleod, who had a habit of walking before breakfast, came into Tim's bedroom while he was still asleep. "Get up!" he said, shaking his pupil's shoulder. "There's a fleet coming into the harbor."

Tim huddled on some clothes, and was in time to see the squadron exchanging salutes with the forts ashore; with field glasses he could make out the black, red, and white flag. For the previous three weeks the town had been agog with rumors of the mysterious sea-doings up and down the coast, somewhere in the vicinity of which the elusive German Pacific Squadron was known to be hovering, after evading the drives of the British and Japanese fleets all the way from Tsingtau. Obscurely significant signs of coming trouble were not wanting; once a business-like British cruiser popped her nose into Valparaiso Bay, looked round, and went quietly away again; once a British tramp, with siren shrieking, bolted to ground under the guns of the Chilian fleet, with a silent German auxiliary cruiser hot in pursuit, afraid to fire, because of the town, but intent on cutting off her prey, neutral waters or not. British steamers sailed furtively, with hidden light; German ships did not sail at all, except for sundry nefarious vessels which slipped out of port, laden with stores and without clearance papers, to the hot indignation of the Chilians. A fishing boat brought a tale of a great fleet of warships near Easter Island. The true was so hopelessly mixed with the false that there was no getting to the bot-



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tom of anything; but here at last was a concrete fact. "It's von Spee," said Tim.

"Come on," remarked Macleod. "We'll take a boat, and see what's to be seen."

Down in the town there were already rumors of a great action, in which the British had had the worst of it. The two sight-seers wasted no time in talk, however, and were soon chugging out in a motor-launch to the now anchored ships. "There's been no battle," observed Macleod, scanning the line as they approached. "Look at them! As neat as a pin."

Certainly it seemed impossible that these trim warships could have been recently exposed to the fire of heavy guns. There was no sign of damage; bluejackets were peaceably swabbing decks, polishing brasswork, and doing the hundred-and-one odd jobs of daily routine. A cook threw overboard a bucket of refuse to the screaming gulls from the *Gneisenau's* galley. As they rounded this ship and read the name *Scharnhorst* on the prow of the next, a steam pinnace passed them, setting the launch rocking in its wake, and Tim saw in it a group of officers whose sleeves bore many gold rings. It was the Admiral, von Spee, going ashore with his staff.

The shore boats, of which there were now hundreds, would have closed in on the ships to talk, but they were warned off and directed to the accommodation ladders. Here the press of traffic was too much for Tim and Mr. Macleod, and they could hold no converse with any one. At last, however, Tim managed to shout to a marine servant on the stern-walk of the *Nürnberg*. "Has there been a battle?" he called up.

"Surely!" replied the marine. "There will be no more English to trouble you in these parts."

"Are they then all sunk?" Tim asked, concealing his dismay.

"All except a few merchant cruisers," the man answered, and then, in response to some call from within, passed out of sight.

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When they got back to the mole, they found it covered by a dense crowd of Germans, all in a state of the wildest exultation and joy, waiting for the chance of an encounter with some member of the crews of the squadron. Some of them knew Tim for the grandson of the General Hardt von Schulenberg, and overlooked his English nationality in their desire for somebody new to talk at. Tim halted curiously, but Macleod thought it prudent to go and wait at a little distance; the *Muelle Prat* was no place for an Englishman that morning, neutral country or not. Yes, there had been a great battle, they said. It was believed that the whole British fleet had been destroyed, but anyhow the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* were sunk. The German ships were undamaged. *Kolossal!* The Admiral had gone to the Consulate. What a glorious event! The crowd was bright-eyed and excited. *Hochs* and snatches of patriotic airs resounded on all sides.

Tim rejoined the gloomy Macleod and imparted what he had learnt. "I'm afraid there's no doubt about it, Tim," said the tutor somberly. "There's been an action of some sort, and we've come off second best. If only they had managed to *hit* them a bit—"

They returned up the hill much depressed. They met one or two Englishmen hurrying down for news, incredulous and alarmed. Valparaiso was a trying place for English people that day. The German business houses had their flags out, and champagne was flowing like water in the German Club. As the day wore on and the wine continued to flow, the streets became full of rejoicing Teutons, who rejoiced with especial fervor when ever they saw any person of British appearance. The German admiral, it was said, was inclined to frown on these jubilations, but the enthusiasm was not in the least dampened, and the German colony eased their full hearts on those of his subordinates who were more accommodating in the matter of hero-worship.

And towards eleven o'clock, in the midst of all this bunting and revelry, a few ambulances came up quite un-

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noticed to the German hospital, and several limp and bandaged forms were carried within.

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After a luncheon which he had not faced with very much zest, the General Hardt von Schulenberg sat upon the terrace of his house, and looked down at the German squadron anchored in the bay. His health on the whole was not quite so good as it had been three months before, when he had discoursed to his grandson about life on the veranda of his country home. Many times during those three months he had been profoundly stirred, and deeply felt emotions are not good for old gentlemen of seventy-seven, however vigorous.

Several times that day he had been made angry, and even now a slight red flush still lingered about his cheek-bones, as he looked at the battleships below. His rank would have secured him ready access to the squadron, had he cared to use it, but he had not done so. He was glad about the victory, of course, very glad, but—an officer of his rank was not going to mix himself up in the mafficking of a lot of foolish civilians, who did not understand what they were talking about. By no means! He was glad to know that the Admiral von Spee, at any rate, shared his views.

Twice during the morning the telephone had rung and demanded his presence; once it was the Consulate, and once the German Chamber of Commerce, with a scheme for a *champañazo,* at which they wished to use his presence as a bait for the Admiral, who was proving unaccountably shy of festivities. The speech of the gentleman who gave this last invitation was somewhat thickened by his potations, and though the General was impeccably correct and courteous with him, deep and incoherent rage shook him to the depths of his ordinarily placid being. What had these fat merchants to do with it? Guzzling champagne over the bodies of brave men! All his soldier's latent contempt for civilians was aroused. "Moreover," he remarked to his son, as they were discussing these things, "von Spee is not

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out of the wood yet. If any mischance befalls him now, we shall look pretty fools in the eyes of the Chilians."

In fact, the General was in a distressed and uncomfortable frame of mind, and felt a desire for action of some sort. He rose from his chair, knocked out a bitter and unsatisfactory pipe, and went in search of his grandson. He at least could be relied upon not to talk rubbish about the victory. He found Tim in his own room, awaiting the coming of the tutor for the afternoon's work.

"Give Mr. Macleod my compliments, Tim, and say that I would like you to have a holiday," said the General. "I feel restless, and I think a walk on the hill would do me good, if he can spare you to come with me."

Macleod had no objection, for they had found it next to impossible to fix their minds on work during the morning. There was no likelihood of news coming in from any source except the German fleet, but they could not resist the impulse to jump up and enquire from every passer-by.

The General set off in moody silence, and the two climbed side by side up the steep slope above the house. In spite of his years the old officer's step was as firm as ever, and he breasted the hill with a vigor that might have put many a younger man to shame. As the cool, sweet air filled his lungs and the open spaces settled about him, the flush left the General's cheeks and he became himself again. At length he stopped and seated himself upon a bank. "Ha! That is better," he said, expanding his chest. "The open air is a soothing thing, Tim. I have been put out this morning. Now who is this, pray, coming up after us? In uniform, is he not? I seem to know the look of him."

A man was following on their tracks, stooping now and again to pick the little orchids which still gemmed the mountain sides in early November. He was collecting them carefully in an envelope. As he came nearer Tim saw that he was wearing naval uniform, with many ribbons on the breast, and recognized him for one of the German

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officers who had been in the pinnace that morning. He halted doubtfully at the sight of them, and then recognition dawned in the amiable face above the rather weak-looking little gray torpedo beard. "General von Schulenberg!" he cried, coming forward with outstretched hand.

"My dear Admiral!" said the General, with equal warmth.

"I have not forgotten your hospitality when we were here in 1902. How is Frau von Schulenberg, and your family? I have not forgotten them either, but I expect they are rather altered since then. Now this—which one is this?"

"This is my English grandson, Tim Staveley," replied the General. "You remember the Herr Professor? He died some years ago, and Tim lives with us now. My other two grandsons are at home, with their regiments."

The Admiral took Tim's hand with a kindly courtesy which quite robbed the situation of any embarrassment. "I have very many English friends," he said simply. "Circumstances for the moment part me from them. But here we are on neutral soil, are we not?"

"I am surprised—though delighted—to see you here, Admiral," observed the General. "Your stay is only for twenty-four hours, is it not, according to naval law? I would have taken the pleasure of recalling myself to you, had I not feared to intrude upon your time."

"I wish some of our less distinguished fellow-countrymen had been as thoughtful," replied the Admiral ruefully. "I have done nothing all day except fend off invitations to junketings. In fact, it is largely to get a little peace that I have come up here. There is my car." He indicated a motor-car, tiny on the road below, with a group of uniformed figures beside it. "As you say, I have no business to be here."

"Odd that we should have chosen the same retreat. I also have come out to escape the importunities of my friends."

"Good people! They mean it kindly," rejoined the Ad-

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miral. "But what *I* want is a little peace and quiet, and moreover I see nothing to rejoice about just at present. I am responsible for the lives of my men, you see. And—my son is on the *Nürnberg,* so that his mother has a double burden in this cruise. I was just gathering some flowers to send to her." He looked rather self-consciously at the little envelope in his hand, and abruptly thrust it into his pocket.

The General nodded. "I must confess that I had intended to postpone my own jubilations until I heard of your safe arrival in Kiel," he observed.

"Then I hope you will be able to jubilate," said the Admiral. "I may as well admit that I do not expect to see Kiel for some time—if ever. I have come up here for a last hour on land. We sail to-night, and the chances are that I shall never set foot on it again. What do you think?"

This was very much what the General did think, but naturally he concealed it. "You will have a difficult time getting through, certainly," he admitted. "But, of course, that is a long way from saying that it cannot be done. After what you have already accomplished, nobody will criticize you if you get your ships a little knocked about on the way."

"Knocked about? *Himmel!* You should have seen poor Cradock," ejaculated the sailor. "I tell you, General, you can have no conception—I had none—of what superior gun-power means with modern armament. We smashed and battered and broke them to pieces—with scarcely a scratch in return. I would hardly have believed. . . . Poor Cradock! And he was a friend of mine too. No, my dear sir, I know only too well what will happen to me if I am caught, and I have a long way to run. I have seen it."

"What did happen, if I may ask? The town is full of gossip."

"They lost their two big ships," replied the Admiral. "The *Glasgow,* their light cruiser, got away in the dark,

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and the armed liner also. We had a few men hit, and got our paint scraped here and there."

"But that is colossal!" said the General warmly.

"No. The result was inevitable, and there is little credit in having done it," said the sailor, in his blunt way. "It was the mad recklessness of poor Cradock. I cannot think what possessed him. I suppose he hoped to damage us—and of course, if *that* had come off, it would have been the end for us, so far away from a base."

"You mean he could have avoided action?"

"Avoided? Of course. We could not offer battle; it was the last thing we could afford to do, unless we had a certainty of winning. Cradock knew that, and he gave us just that certainty—on the chance of doing us a little damage. Well, he did it deliberately, and he paid for it."

"It was a courageous thing to do," remarked the General.

The Admiral nodded. "I knew him well," he said, and added rather bitterly: "Such credit as there is belongs to him, I suppose. *We* were little more than executioners."

And then he began to talk, in the jerky, disjointed fashion of an overwrought man, who finds discussion half relief, half irritant. The strain of his hunted existence during the last few months had told upon his nerves, and ever and again his hands, clasped across his knees as he sat on the turf, would grip until the knuckles stood out white.

He told the story of that queer sea-fight, which must for ever remain half a mystery, since one of its protagonists vanished in a glory of flame and thunder, leaving his motives only half guessed. The German fleet had been bucketing southwards through heavy seas to take station round the port of Coronel, where a lone British cruiser was reputed to be lurking, when they ran across the trail of the enemy's main body, which was, to judge by its scattered formation, equally unaware of the proximity of its adversary. With a twig in the dust of the hillside the Admiral illustrated the swift maneuvers which brought

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both fleets side by side, steaming southwards on parallel courses, and the efforts of the British Admiral, stultified by his inferior speed, to obtain the landward position. And here was the curious feature of the whole affair, for the weaker force, which might have been expected to shun battle and fall back upon its supports, persistently stood in, while the stronger side as persistently evaded them. "I thought it was a trap," admitted the Admiral. "I thought he *must* have something up his sleeve, to act so. He kept on sending wireless messages also, but that may have been a bluff; but it was my belief that he had a big ship somewhere, though why it never came and where it is I do not know. But that was how I explained to myself his confidence." So he had kept cautiously out of reach all afternoon, and made sure of his victory before risking anything, since the choice was his; and only at sunset, when the hulls of the British ships stood out clear against the after-glow, had he turned his own line, already invisible in the darkling seas, to meet the onset.

A combatant sees very little in a modern naval action, whatever his rank, but the Admiral's fragmentary words gave the two listeners a far more vivid impression of the battle than the most carefully compiled official account could have done. The dark hulls of the ships, pitching and rolling heavily in the rising seas, with spray flying high in the air from the plunging bows; the smash of the heavy guns firing, and the more rapid whack, whack, whack of the secondary armament; the answering flashes from the distant British, and the scream of projectiles overhead, muffled by armored wall; the icy chill of the windy waters; they felt them all as if they had been there. Interspersed amongst these general impressions were little vignettes of photographic clearness; the first salvo of the *Scharnhorst* getting home on the *Good Hope,* with shattering effect; the shell-riven *Monmouth,* blazing fiercely under the guns of the *Gneisenau;* the appalling grandeur of fire and flame, filling the whole vault of heaven, as the English flagship blew up and foundered; a distant hoarse note floating

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eerily across the black water—cheering of the disabled *Monmouth's* crew, as the escaping *Glasgow* steamed past her out of action.

"In fifty minutes," said the Admiral, "it was over—The *Good Hope* was gone; the *Monmouth* had stopped firing, and the other ships had fled. It was getting rougher, but the moon was coming up between the squalls. I judged it safe to close then; there was not much risk of damage to us any more, and that was what I had to think of, first and last. And then, what do you think? Those unlucky English! They scattered in the night, and the *Monmouth* was staggering off northwards, nearly shot to pieces; she evaded us safely, and then—crawled straight into the path of the *Nürnberg,* which had been away chasing some merchant ships. The *Nürnberg's* people were driving her back, wild with annoyance at having missed the battle. Well—"

The Admiral gave a slight laugh, the most unmirthful sound, Tim thought, that he had ever heard in a human mouth.

"My son is a sub-lieutenant on the *Nürnberg,"* he continued. "He cannot talk of it without feeling physically sick. The *Monmouth* had a heavy list; she could not work her guns, but her flag was flying, and so they had to sink her. The sea was too rough to save anybody. A murderous business truly."

"War," said the General soberly.

"It is war. That is what we are for, of course. All my life I have been working, and training, and looking forward to this. To see my ships in action! A few months ago that was my chief ambition. Well! It has moved me profoundly, I admit, but not as I expected. I did not feel much of the exhilaration of battle. It was too one-sided. One felt as if one were throwing stones at a drowning man. If they had been able to hit us back a little—"

Tim remembered the gloomy Macleod, a few hours before, saying: "If only they had managed to *hit* them a bit." This was a strange echo.

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"One sees very ugly things in battle," remarked the General. "I remember that in my first campaign a man of my squadron, who happened to be the son of a forester on my father's estate, was killed by my side. A good boy. I knew his old mother and father. When I saw him all smashed and broken on the ground, I must confess I found it difficult to remember that he had died a glorious death for his Fatherland. It just seemed a very bloody and foolish waste. But one has to remember the larger issue."

"It is not so much that that I feel. No. Death in action is one thing. But I wish I had been a sailor a hundred years ago, when it was not so much a matter of machinery. This pounding to pieces at long range— I cannot forget poor Cradock, talking of sport over his cigar as I saw him last, and then I think of him amongst all that crumpled iron and escaping steam— And those poor fellows on the *Monmouth* cheering. Sailors very like ours. I wonder if the admiral who sinks me will be some one who has passed me the decanter after dinner."

"My dear Admiral," observed the General, eyeing the sailor keenly, "you are really over-pessimistic. Give your good fortune a chance to prove itself. It has served you well, so far."

Admiral von Spee smiled. "I have been too long at sea, my friend," he returned. "And I know too much about the English."

He rose from the bank on which he had been sitting, and turned his back upon the sea. "How green those trees are up the valley," he remarked. "Of course, it is the springtime here. When I last saw spring foliage it was in my garden at home; but it must be winter there now."

A distant hail, respectful but firm, came up from the motor-car so far below. The Admiral looked in that direction. "That is my staff. They must think I have deserted," he said, with a suspicion of a twinkle. "General, I have been most fortunate in meeting you. And you, young sir, will not, I hope, have gathered much from my

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talk which will be of service to your Admiralty. I have been forgetting your nationality."

"Herr Admiral," replied Tim, "as you have already remarked, this is neutral soil. In Chile, by Chilian law, I am a Chilian."

"Ah, that is reassuring!" he answered, smiling. "Then I shall not be shot on my own quarterdeck, like your English Byng. Good-by! My time is short, and I must hurry."

"Good-by to you," said the General. "I wish you luck on your great adventure."

The Admiral shook hands briefly, and walked down the hill with bowed head. He fixed his gaze on the sea, and did not look again up the valley.

"That was well said, Tim," remarked the General approvingly to his grandson. "I perceive that you are not all English. No Englishman could have turned that remark so neatly." He gazed after the Admiral, and shook his head. "There goes a man who has been badly strained," he observed. "That is the disadvantage of having too much imagination in war. But it has its compensations too; the real thing is never so bad as your imaginings. I have seen a fat *feldwebel,* with never a nerve in his body, scream like a stuck pig at the sound of the first shell; he had never thought of danger before, you see. And I have seen a spectacled student, who had been pale with fear for a week, behave like a veteran at his first action, because it was not so bad as he expected. Our friend the Admiral will be positively cheerful when he has his foe in front of him, and knows the worst."

"Do you think that he will be sunk, sir?"

"I should think it very likely. Captured or sunk. And as he says not captured, and he should know, therefore sunk. That was my own opinion, before ever we met him. Those blockheads in the town do not understand."

"We shall have to send a strong fleet to get him."

"Stronger in weight of metal, yes. I can see that the mechanical element counts more now than in my time. There will be no more charging batteries of guns." He

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sighed. "Heigh-ho! What an inhuman business! To-day your Cradock, sunk without a blow in return, to-morrow, perhaps, our von Spee, if he meets some ship a step more formidable. Nothing man-to-man about it, Tim."

"Well, sir," observed Tim thoughtfully, "if I were going to be one of the men, and you the other, I don't know whether I wouldn't prefer it the modern way. You're about two feet higher than I am, you see."

The General laughed, and gazed down at his grandson from his great height. "I suppose that is true," he admitted. "We sigh for the good old days, we muscular barbarians, because then muscle ruled the roost. Now any professor can annihilate a squadron by pressing a button. Look! There goes the Admiral."

The distant limousine was crawling away. From the anchored ships a single gun boomed; they were preparing for sea.

Grandfather and grandson walked down the hill in thoughtful silence. The General was weighing up nautical possibilities, pure and simple. Tim's trend of thought was different; he was musing over national heroes, and how differently they appeared in real life and in the history books.

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Two hours later the Admiral walked from the Chilean Navy offices by the waterside to the mole where his pinnace waited. He passed through a lane in a great crowd of ecstatic fellow-countrymen, whose cheers could be heard even at the General's distant house upon the hill. The German ladies strewed his path with a carpet of blossom. His staff walked through the shower of buds with the cheerful embarrassment proper to such an occasion, but the Admiral looked neither to right nor left, advancing to the pier with unsmiling face and steady tread. As he passed the sentries he turned, and faced the crowd behind him. A sudden silence fell.

"Keep those flowers for our graves," said the Admiral von Spee, and went down to the waiting boat.

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## CHAPTER X

## *INDIVIDUAL REACTIONS TO A CURRENT COMPLEX*

THE first effect of the world war in this distant land was oddly enough, to drive the opposing nationals into conference round a table. With the news of the first ultimatum a paralysis settled upon trade, and there was a worse money panic in South America than in Europe, owing to the utter dependence of the whole continent upon the great international centers of finance. Whatever their feelings, therefore, the English and German and Austrian (who are now called Jugo-Slav) bankers and merchants had to put their heads together and support their Chilian colleagues in an effort to keep the wheels turning.

But if you think that this forcible coöperation of the hostile citizens, and the fact that they dwelt side by side —indeed, frequently in houses that were semi-detached— was sufficient to open their eyes to the essential lunacy of war between civilized peoples, the madness which makes respectable fathers of families dress up in uncomfortable regalia and run about fields in a clumsily murderous manner, for an abstract cause which not one person in a hundred ever considers, you do less than justice to the eminent unreasonableness of human nature. It did not take the English and German colonies in Valparaiso any longer to become mutually hostile than it took the population of Leeds and Hamburg—indeed, perhaps it took less time. Englishmen who had dwelt for years in amity with the German who lived next door suddenly discovered that he was a foul Hun and a baby-killer, and that no fate was bad enough for him and his wife and children. The German, on his part, realized with equal suddenness that his neighbor was an English pig-dog, and looked forward



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openly and with confidence to the day when Germany should teach such upstarts their real position in the scheme of things. Even Mr. Brown, who had sheltered under Herr Schmidt's hospitable roof for three months at the time of the earthquake, and had then sworn eternal gratitude, now felt impelled to stare through his benefactor in the street—not, of course, that Herr Schmidt would have acknowledged recognition if he had received it. He had been ready to do anything for the Englishman and that good Mrs. Brown before; but now somebody had murdered an Archduke in Serbia, and, as was only logical, it became at once more than obvious to Herr Schmidt that he had been mistaken all these years, and that the Browns were monsters in human form.

Of all the foreigners the English and the Germans were closest in race and ideas, and they had been inter-related and connected in business to a very great extent. The prevalent mania stopped short at divorce for patriotic reasons, but only just at that. Partnerships were dissolved, old and faithful employees were turned into the street, and brothers-in-law no longer knew one another. The British Club in Valparaiso got up an internal dispute, typical of those hysterical times, about one of its members, who had been in partnership with a German and refused to ruin himself by liquidating his interests too quickly, which eventually came to the stage of pamphleteering. In a very short while a new battle-cry arose—no trading with the enemy; and the British Consuls, emerging from the hermit-crabdom of official routine, became very industrious and dislocating over the preparation of a Black List of those who defied it. It was of course impossible to prevent Germans buying from and selling to English firms through Chilians if they chose to do so, and the only result of this particular method of winning the war was the creation of a new class of plutocrat, the *palo blanco,* or go-between, which soon started to buy large villas in the fashionable part of the town. Moreover, many of the consuls in the smaller towns were themselves in the

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same line of business as the compatriots over whose operations they were now placed in control, a situation presenting many pleasing possibilities to the commercial instinct.

At the very beginning the German and French reservists were called up by their respective consuls and sent to Europe. England, being at that time still under the delusion that one volunteer was worth three pressed men, remained officially dumb with regard to potential cannon-fodder under foreign skies; but there were many young men who wanted to serve their country, and even more who jumped at the chance of getting back home to England again on any pretext at all. Such of these as were employed by big British firms now approached their chiefs and demanded repatriation. The first impulse of the heads of the British houses, faced with the expenditure of hundreds of unproductive pounds in passage money, was to refuse hotly; but being appraised by cable from their head offices that patriotism was now the fashion, they executed an adroit *volte face,* and gave these stalwarts a fatherly send-off. After which they regarded with a kindlier eye, and immediately promoted to the shoes of the absent swashbucklers (where they still remain) those cooler-blooded individuals who were canny enough to see that Chile was a good deal more comfortable than the trenches were likely to be, and that now was the opportunity for a man of sense and no high-flown notions. . . .

To sum up, all these people behaved very much as we would have done, and as people did do all the world over. Humanity was not, as many people at that time seemed to suppose, transformed and purified by the outbreak of war; it remained very much the same after August 4th as previously, and those of an acquisitive bent, though they disguised it under the current hysterical parrot-cries, continued to look after Number One as much as usual. While the war itself eddied round the Chilian coast feeling ran very high, but after Coronel had been avenged by the Falklands, and the *Dresden* had been ignominiously hunted down at Robinson Crusoe's Island, the force of habit re-

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asserted itself. Money began to pour into South America, as if to compensate for the way in which it was being poured out on the other side of the world, and to impress the residents with a sense of their own cleverness in becoming so rich—for, needless to say, they took all the credit themselves. Taking it all in all, they had a hectic and prosperous time, and when the volunteers who had gone off with such a flourish came back after the war—what were left of them—they were regarded with contemptuous pity for having placed themselves, by their own imprudence, so far from the center of things.

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For many months the life of the family in Calle Hospital continued to be unchanged upon the surface. Tim was seventeen in the August of the declaration of war, and it never occurred to him that these stirring events held any personal implication. It would be over by Christmas, everybody said; and then, when Christmas came and it was by no means over, certainly in the spring; by no possible stretch of the mind could anybody imagine it going beyond the end of 1915. Mr. Macleod came as usual, though not without adverse comment; certain vinous patriots opined that it was a damn scandal, and that he ought to be turned out of the British Club, but as it was discovered that he had never belonged to the Club, this fell rather flat. One or two self-appointed authorities endeavored to reprimand Mr. Macleod for his lack of patriotism in going to a German house, but the tutor, who developed a vein of unexpected ferocity when aroused, gave them such an unpleasant time of it that these efforts were discontinued. He himself was too attached to his pupil to give up his work, and too sensible to acquire a prejudice against his old friends and employers because of a calamity which was neither of their making nor his. None the less, Tim's life at this time became a trifle lonely, for his English acquaintances either disowned him, or were effusively broad-minded, which was almost as bad; and he felt a slight delicacy with regard to hobnobbing

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with Germans at such a time, in spite of his mixed blood. But as he had always taken pleasure in his own company he contrived to rub along, taking the liveliest interest in everything connected with the war, and cursing the bad luck which had made him too young to see any of it himself.

Except in so far as their sympathies and anxieties were aroused by the participation of Fritz and Kurt, the ladies of the family took very little stock of the matter. The Señora, of course, was inclined to be indignant about the war; she had not wanted it, and she did not see why she should be affected by it. That her grandsons should be involved was, she felt, an outrage specially leveled against herself; she seemed to take it for granted that if they had only been safely in Chile the whole thing could have been ignored. Aunt Olga's interest was entirely maternal; in the outcome of the rights and wrongs of the struggle she felt no concern. The two girls were much mortified by the dearth of young men, at a time when young men were just beginning to occupy their thoughts; for of course, British young men were tabu for patriotic reasons, even if those who had chosen the prudent course of staying in Chile had been worthy of notice, and German young men there were not—a most annoying state of affairs for young maidens just getting to the age when dances and similar matters are the most important things in life.

Colonel Max, as he now was, took merely an academic interest in the course of the war. He was now over fifty, and would not have been accepted for combatant service in the German army if he had offered himself, at that stage, so that he had no thought of it. He hoped wholeheartedly that Germany would win, and was very proud of his sons; but his sentiments went no deeper.

The head of the house, however, was in a rather different case.

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The General Hardt von Schulenberg was too old and too experienced to share the arrogant view-point of the Junker

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class in which he had been born, but he had regarded the outbreak of war much as he had seen his country's entry into previous wars—that is to say, with profound belief in the justice of the German cause, and implicit faith in the outcome. But as time went on disturbing thoughts had begun to trouble the veteran—small points which stuck and rankled. He had been dubious as to what sort of a job these young men might make of it, and he found his worst premonitions justified; they bungled things in a way that irritated the old officer extremely. He wondered, as all the world has wondered since, why on earth they did not take Paris when it lay before them, why on earth they had not taken the Channel ports, why they did not adopt any one of a dozen courses rather than sit still all through the winter of 1914 and let their enemies get ready. It was not the way they had done things in '70. And then again, living in a neutral country he could not but view with impatience the wanton disregard of world opinion which was such a crass feature of German policy in those days. For instance, the fleet had violated Chilian neutrality in the most flagrant way over and over again, and while the General saw nothing to object to in that—for all is fair in war—he did not think that it was a sound thing to carry it off with such a high hand that the Chilians were driven into becoming strongly pro-Ally, after having started with equally placed sympathies. It was not common sense. It caused the German Pacific Squadron to be regarded as no better than pirates, to such an extent that when the British in their turn violated international law by sinking the *Dresden* in Chilian waters they only became more popular thereby. And the invasion of Belgium, too; the General understood perfectly well the importance of that to the scheme of attack, and, to be candid, the fate of Belgium moved him not at all. When Germany had won the war Belgium would have to toe the line like everybody else, and as well sooner as later. But when victory was won the conqueror was entitled to use the iron hand; be-

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fore that the combatants were on an equal footing, and neither side was justified in assuming the rights of Super-Men in regard to treaties. The General did not like it. He did not like the comments of the Chilian papers, and he liked still less the plain words he had read in an American paper, beneath a reproduction of the treaty regarding Belgium which bore his country's dishonored signature. He condemned the Belgian invasion as an act of doubtful faith, and that unfortunate remark about scraps of paper as unbelievably imbecile folly.

These were his first disillusionments about The Day, and as time went on a vague indescribable feeling grew upon him that things were slipping and sliding, that ground that he had believed solid was turning to a morass, and that the world which had seemed to be so plain and simple to a man who did his duty was now becoming obscure and complicated and sinister. All his life he had believed whole-heartedly in two things—his country's power in battle and its civilizing mission. That Germany should grow great was, he believed, the best thing that could happen for the world. And now the first of these axioms had received a rude shock—for the General was an expert; he knew the relative strength of the powers in the field, and that by all the rules of war Germany should have smashed her adversaries in the first two months. The various excuses by which the High Command explained away its failures did not deceive him; the reason of their non-success was pure incompetence, and as month followed month things drifted further and further into deadlock. As for Germany's civilizing mission—well, the General had the benefit of the neutral press, and it had to be admitted that the opinion of the world seemed to be that the Reich was an empire of barbarians and savages. All this British and French propaganda about atrocities (of which, needless to say, the General believed not a word) had no doubt been skillfully done, but even discounting the odium wrongfully aroused by that, there was no doubt that Ger-

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many's behavior was adversely criticized. The General's faith in his country was as strong as ever, but his faith in its leaders grew less and less.

And then came the beginning of the submarine campaigns, and the sinking of the *Lusitania.*

The General was ready to believe everything that its apologists put forward for this act. He was firmly convinced that the ship carried munitions of war, and that the sinking of her was legal. But no sophistry of this sort could in his view sidestep the fact that an unescorted passenger liner, with women and little children aboard, had been sunk without notice. If the submarine had called upon the ship to stop, even— But, as it was, the General was sickened; he said nothing to anybody, not even to his son, but he scarcely left his house for weeks afterwards. He did not want to look his friends in the face. He read the papers as they arrived from Germany, and wondered, over their savage gloating, what evil thing had come to the country he loved. There seemed to be a new spirit abroad among its people—something weak and yet ruthless, like a vicious beast. He felt that he had outlived his time, and was inclined to wish that he had not. The days went on and on, and that logical world-purifying German victory, which had shone so brightly and splendidly, almost holily, before his eyes at first, became more and more obviously not mankind's God-given destiny. And if the General had not looked seventy-seven, he did look every day of seventy-eight.

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As the first anniversary of the war drew nearer, the world came slowly to the realization that this incubus in jack-boots was firmly settled on its chest, and was not going to be easily unhorsed. People began to readjust their ideas in the light of this inspiration; the merchant laid his nets more widely and more boldly for the rich flotsam which the tide of other people's sorrows might bring; the locked battle lines began to assume more and more the character of a permanent institution; the British

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Empire, which had gone into war rather as it might have entered for a tremendous international sporting competition, began to understand that this was business, and to take it seriously at last. And this subtle change in the mentality of the race reacted on the minds of Mr. Macleod and Tim, as they sat one winter's morning at the familiar table in Tim's room, with the familiar books before them.

"Laddie," remarked Mr. Macleod, "I've been doing a lot of thinking lately, and I've made up my mind. I'm going home to join the army."

"You, sir?" Tim had somehow never visualized Mr. Macleod as a combatant; he had regarded him as too old to fight, for he was hedged about in the eyes of his pupil by his scholarly calling. "But aren't you—?" He remembered himself in time, and substituted: "What about your asthma?"

"Oh, well, it's much better than it used to be, you know, and they say here"— he tapped the English newspaper, five weeks old, that he had just unwrapped from its folder, —"that the average life at the front doesn't last more than six weeks, or six hours in one of these affairs like Neuve Chapelle. While as for this Dardanelles business— So you see, my asthma won't have time to matter much."

"But supposing they won't accept you?"

"I shall have to take the risk of that. They wouldn't have done, of course, if I'd tried last year; I shouldn't have come up to the standard, and besides I was over the age limit at the beginning. But by now they won't be so particular, after such appalling casualties as we've had." We learn but slowly; the war was only in its tenth month, and men could still be horrified by slaughter. Loos, the Somme, and the Russian collapse were still in the womb of Time, and the stage had not yet been reached when the mind became surcharged and numb with the shedding of blood, and took no more count of the slain. Nor was it yet realized how small a thing is fifty thousand men in the tale of our vast modern populations.

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"It'll probably be all over before you get sent to the front," remarked Tim.

"Maybe. I'm sure I hope so; I'm scarcely cut out for the military profession—though, of course," he added drily, "I shall take care not to enlist in a cavalry regiment."

Tim laughed. The thought of his tutor in a cavalry charge was a humorous one.

"But, do you know," continued Mr. Macleod, with the air of propounding a wild idea which he did not expect his hearer to believe, "I should not be surprised if the war lasted out another winter?"

"Do you really think so, sir?" said Tim, frankly wistful.

The tutor nodded gravely. "When Lord Kitchener put it at three years, I for one did not believe him. But it goes on and on. What if he is right, after all?"

"Three years is absurd, of course," replied Tim. "But I say, you know, it looks as if—I mean— Do you think I have any chance of doing anything myself? I shall be eighteen in August. I've been thinking of nothing else lately."

"Well, Tim, I was coming to that," said Mr. Macleod. "If this goes on, it looks to me as if your university career will have to be postponed. I don't know what's become of the universities in all this confusion, but you can't very well be the only undergraduate at one."

"With the war on? I should rather think not!"

"Then the question is, what? I've thought the matter over, and really the best thing under the circumstances would be for us to go home together, and see what we can see when we get there. Always provided that your grandfather will agree, of course. I had hoped that you might be able to stay out of it—"

"Thanks!" said Tim sarcastically.

"Oh, I know how you feel. But it is a great waste, all the same."

"Well, there's no time like the present, sir. Let's go and see grandad now."

"Perhaps I had better see him first," suggested the tutor.

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He found the General in his room—that same room in which the council of four had endeavored to settle Tim's destiny, in the days before it became obvious that the fate of Tim and his like was to be arranged without troubling their friends—sticking flags in a large-scale map of Galicia. All along the wall opposite the windows the relics of past military glory—the Sedan eagle, the lancer's pennant from Trautenau, the swords of honor, the faded photographs of the be-whiskered warriors in their uniforms of the last century—had been removed, with unconscious symbolism, to make way for an array of maps —of the French front, of the Warsaw lines, the Carpathians, the Dardanelles, Serbia, East Africa, Mesopotamia. The General followed the war in detail. On the scarred oak writing desk stood a cabinet photograph of Kurt, in the uniform of a lieutenant of Engineers, wearing the Iron Cross he had won at Verdun. He was now attached to the staff of a division, and was earning golden opinions. Fritz, who had taken part as a private soldier in the battles round the Masurian Lakes, was also in training for a commission. Pride in the achievements of the two boys, in whom he saw himself over again, was the one bright side of the war to the veteran.

"Are you busy, sir?" asked the tutor.

"Busy?" The General turned from the map, with a flag in his fingers. "Why, no, Macleod. What is it?"

"I'm afraid I must resign my post, sir. I can't tell you how much I regret it, though my work with Tim would soon have been ended in any case. I intend to go home and try to get into the army."

"*So!* I thought that something like that might occur," observed the General. "That is creditable of you, Macleod. I only hope that your asthma does not find you out again. It is a pity that you are not a German, for then they would have found you some suitable duty. I mistrust this voluntary system of the English. There are a hundred strong young Englishmen in Valparaiso who should be in the field before you."

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"One just has to take such things as they come, sir. The more important question is what is to be done about Tim. I suppose you have realized that he is getting very close to military age, and the war shows no signs of finishing. I'm afraid his university career will have to be put off; it's a thousand pities."

The General sighed. "Yes, I have thought of it very often lately," he admitted. "Does Tim . . . ?"

"Exactly, sir," said the tutor.

"I wish now that we had acted otherwise with regard to him," went on the General, toying with his little German flag. "Perhaps that English school would have done him good, after all. As it is, he will go out into all this, with his delicate brain and his eye for beauty. . . . Such a child, Macleod! Of course, I was no older when I first became an officer, but that was different. We had intended other things for Tim. And once he leaves here—We are German and he is English. He will be very much alone."

"I expect I will be able to set him on his feet at first, at any rate," observed Macleod. "The thing will be to get him a commission. Do you remember that Captain Nicholls, sir, who was out here over the Argentine Boundary business? He was very friendly with us at the time. He might help."

"Nicholls? Oh, yes, I remember. That is a good idea. But"—a shadow of doubt crossed the General's face—"feelings are very bitter. Do you think that he—?"

"Oh, there won't be anything of that sort about Nicholls, unless he's changed very much since I knew him."

"Well, that would be very good. Then there are the solicitors in London who can keep an eye on him. I will write to them. As for the rest, he must sink or swim. He is a sound enough youngster, though I wish, as things are, that he had been less of a genius and more like his cousins. War is no business for exceptional people."

"It's a damnable waste," said Mr. Macleod, thinking of the years of careful study and training.

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"How I am to tell my wife I do *not* know," observed the General. "He has always been her favorite. She is so sanely simple, you know. The madness that has taken the rest of us is too complex for her; she will just think it horrible that Tim should go to fight against his cousins. And so it is. I never realized it before—I was too close to it, I suppose—but war between civilized nations is lunacy. Ah, well! We are too small to know the rights of it. We can only do our best to end it. I only wish my duty was as plain as Tim's."

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There was consternation when Tim's going was announced to the others, and the poor Señora took it as badly as her husband had anticipated. Her views on war were not very clear-cut, and nothing could disabuse her of the idea that Macleod and Tim were going to enter into an immediate lethal combat with Kurt and Fritz. It was useless for the General and his son to insist that the chances were a million to one against their ever being within a mile of each other; the old lady's eyes filled with tears as they spoke. "We were so happy here," she said, in a quiet way very affecting to those who were accustomed to her usual bustle. "Max and Olga, Gretchen and Carlos, and the little ones as we grew older. And now half of them are gone already, Hans, and the babies—our little babies—are grown up and going to fight each other. *Ay de mi!* I am an old woman."

Preparations were made with the practical attention to detail which always masked the underlying craziness of those days, and before long the passages were booked, the luggage packed, the blue labels of the Pacific Line already affixed to it, and Tim's hours in Chile were numbered. Now that he was to leave it, he found a previously unnoticed charm about the familiar house. Every corner of the garden was alive with memories of childhood; beloved ghosts sat in every chair. The cheerful brown faces of the servants; the friendly tradespeople who had given him *llapas*—little presents in kind—when he was small;

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his shelf of books, many of them with his name on the fly-leaf in his father's straggling hand; it was hard to leave them when the day came.

Another thing that he found unexpectedly difficult to bear was the genuine sorrow of the humbler neighbors at his departure. They sent scores of contributions to his equipment, from sets of silver spurs with three-inch rowels, which would have caused a great sensation on a British parade ground, to an enormous layer cake, or *mil hojas* as it is called in Chile, which was scarcely a practicable iron ration. Every few minutes on his last day some smiling graybeard, or ex-housemaid, or little boy from some *rancho* where he was on nodding terms, knocked at the back door with a trifle *"para elpatroncito que se va a la guerra."* All this unsuspected kindliness touched Tim exceedingly. And it seemed an odd thing to put one's hat on in the familiar house just as usual, and to wait for the Señora's parting instructions to the servants about *almuerzo* in the immemorial way, and to think that one was not to participate in that *almuerzo,* and that by nightfall one would be on the ocean a hundred miles away. But beyond the complex and partly unpleasant emotions of the moment lay the world—his oyster.

No Englishman bound on such a journey ever had a stranger party to bid him God-speed. The General, typical of the old school of Prussian officer; Colonel Max, in his *pickelhaube* (he had come straight from some ceremonial parade); Dr. Kuhn, with his square head and thick-lensed spectacles, an absolute cartoon of a German; these formed a trio at which Macleod could not help smiling, as they solemnly blessed the departure of the two recruits for the fighting forces of their enemies. Tim's grandmother, aunt, and cousins, of course, were present, and there were a number of friends as well; but the general appearance of the party, and its language, was distinctly Teutonic, and Tim felt thankful—and immediately felt a cur for feeling thankful—that the liners did

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not come alongside the mole, and that he would arrive on board the English mail boat without a background.

"Remember, Tim," said the General, taking his grandson a little aside, "run no risks; be the first out of cover if you like, but be the first into it also. Remember, too, that in war it does not matter much what you do, so that you do it first; nobody has any idea of what is happening in a battle. If you can remember those things, and can learn to find your way in the dark, and to tell your right hand from your left, you will be a soldier.

I may as well record here that Tim found the last of these things to be the hardest.

The General wrung his hand, and he followed Macleod down the weedy steps to the boat.

He looked back as they rose and fell to the lift of the Pacific, and the shouts of "Good-by!" and *"Auf wiedersehen!"* came floating across the water. The sunlit scene etched itself indelibly upon his artist's brain; the General's snow-white hair and wistful eyes; his grandmother's wide skirts and black silk shawl; Uncle Max's blue frock-coat and saber, and the spread eagle on his helmet; the little doctor's kindly beaming face; the flashing monocle of Admiral Sir James Gonzalez; the little group of friends, outlined upon the jetty against the bright blue of the sky and the brilliant white of the buildings. Their voices grew faint; stroke by stroke the boatmen lengthened the distance between them until they were tiny, and the hull of the mail boat loomed huge in front. Then they were tossing and lurching at the foot of the accommodation ladder, and Tim seized a rope and pulled himself on to it. "Hup!" said the seaman, forcibly assisting him. "You're aboard, sir."

He was on British soil. When he looked back to the land he found that he was too far away to distinguish individuals. Though he did not suspect it, he had looked his last upon most of that group of friends.

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## CHAPTER XI

### *THE MOTHER OF NATIONS*

"THIS isn't a bit what I expected," remarked Tim, looking round at neat white-painted wood-work and frosted glass. "I always thought that lawyers' offices were frowsty dusty places with the lights on all day—you know, the sort of thing you read about in Dickens. But then nothing ever does seem to turn out as you expect, does it?"

Mr. Macleod, who had been thinking how well the boy's English clothes suited him, paused to consider that nobody had a better right than Tim to make such a remark as that. For a child born to such advantages as had seemed his, certainly nothing very much had happened according to expectation. Through nobody's fault, he had nearly been canceled as a human quantity by disease, drowning, and earthquake; he had been orphaned, and thwarted of the upbringings of his anticipations; those of whom he was fondest had been declared his enemies by Royal Proclamation; and now, as if impatient of merely prodding him away from the road of his choice, the Fates had picked up his life-plan holus-bolus by the four corners, like a great blanket woven in the design of Mercator's Prejection, and were tossing him in it, head over heels, and letting him bounce where he might. Where next, Mr. Macleod wondered? Gallipoli, India, anywhere at all! "I suppose not," he replied to Tim's remark. "What about England? Does that come up to your expectations?"

*"Rather!"* answered Tim. "Do you know, I find it almost impossible to believe I've been here only a few days? I seem to have known it always. And yet in



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some ways it isn't in the least like what I thought it would be."

"I suppose not," said Mr. Macleod again. "Tell me, Tim, what *have* been your first impressions? I've always wondered what people from South America, where there's so much space and so few people, make of Europe, where it's just the opposite. When they first see it, I mean. You remember that Peruvian senator on the ship, when we anchored for the night in the Mersey? He couldn't believe that New Brighton wasn't Liverpool."

"Yes, I remember," said Tim, with a grin. "He said that there couldn't be such a large city as that without his having heard of it."

"Well, you're a noticing chap. What has impressed you the most? Gratify my academic interest."

"Let's see," said Tim, considering. "It's so easy to be carried away by the conventional, and to say Westminster Abbey or something like that. As a matter of fact those things are very interesting, of course, but just exactly like the books and pictures. I think—yes, the first thing that struck me was the extraordinary *blank* look on the faces of the people in the street. You know, like fish in a tank. Don't they ever laugh or curse or think about anything?"

"I know what you mean," explained Macleod. "It's due to the enormous numbers of people. In a place like Valparaiso you know every second person you meet, so you're on the alert. Here you don't expect to see a soul you know."

"Well, then," continued Tim, "the next thing was the way you put the luggage in the train. Just gave the porter a shilling and thought no more about it, and there it was all correct when we got to London. How is it that it doesn't get lost or stolen? You've no ticket or receipt for it. It's simply amazing."

"Generations of honesty," said Macleod. "It just doesn't occur to anybody to steal it. Next?"

"Next—well, it's part of the same thing. We got two

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cups of tea at Crewe, and they gave us the cups and saucers without a word. We put them under the seat. Do they ever expect to see them again?"

"Oh, yes. They collect them at the termini."

"By George, if they ever give them to Chilenos they'll do no collecting at the termini. Then, of course, it was a little strange at first to hear everybody talking English—the porters and cabmen and so on. I couldn't help wanting to speak to them in Spanish. The countryside, too—What a lovely place it is! All those little fields, as if they'd been done over with a brush and comb. It's like a garden."

"Of course, that's what it is. Every inch of it has been cared for, and watered, and trimmed for a thousand years."

"I wonder what they'd make of the farms in Chile, with a cactus hedge twenty feet wide between one field and the next?" speculated Tim. "Those are the things that impressed me most, I think."

"But didn't London strike you as being wonderful?"

"No," said Tim frankly, "I can't say that it did. At least, no more wonderful than I expected. You see, I've always been brought up to look upon Europe as wonderful in that way—every South American is. If I were to meet an angel with a golden trumpet floating along the street, I should simply think: *'Claro! Europa!'* Of course, it was rather exciting to see 'Strand' written up just as if it was any other place, and to know that one was actually there. But the thing that astonished me about London was the quiet of it. I'd always thought that London was noisy—'the roar of the traffic,' you know, and all that. By George, English people don't know what noisy traffic is. In London it stands still most of the time, and the streets are so well paved that it can't make a noise anyhow. If a Londoner could take a stroll down Calle Esmeralda, he'd get an idea of what real noise means."

"What about the war?"

"Exactly," said Tim. "What about it? There doesn't

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seem to be one. I used to read the *Hamburger Nachrichten* that Herr Roepke sent every week to grandad, and I had an idea that things were pretty serious here. Nobody seems to worry about it at all. There are no signs of it."

"Except for all the soldiers in the streets."

"Are there more than usual?" said foreign-born Tim innocently. "There don't seem to be any more, in proportion, than we had in Chile."

The glazed door opened, and a small and inky boy came in. "Mr. Haythornthwaite can see you now, sir," he remarked.

Macleod rose to his feet. "Come on, Tim," he said.

As Tim had pointed out, the offices of Haythornthwaite, Isherwood & Haythornthwaite were not at all like the conventional solicitors' office of fiction. The clerks' room, through which they passed, was very bright and clean, with much white paint and American oak furniture about, as if the firm had been started yesterday instead of in 1789. The little corridors behind the main room, and the numerous doors in the white paneling with the names of the half dozen partners on them, resembled nothing so much as a rather well-got-up hairdresser's shop, and Tim half expected Mr. Haythornthwaite, as he rose from his chair, to have a comb and scissors in his waistcoat pocket.

Mr. Haythornthwaite was the head of the firm, and he saw Tim himself, not because the importance of his affairs entitled him to the time of so great a man, but out of courtesy and a desire to see what the son of the famous botanist might turn out to be like. He was not either of the two Haythornthwaites mentioned in the firm's name, nor was the present Mr. Isherwood the Mr. Isherwood. They were son and grandson of those who had been partners in the business when its style was last changed, now a great number of years ago. However, the present Haythornthwaite was undoubtedly the greatest of all, for besides his inherited position as head of one of the oldest legal firms (who were specialists in trustee-

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ship, and much in request by those who did not credit their wives and offspring with any great quantity of gray matter), he had a turn for finance, and was chairman or director of many public companies.

He looked a great deal more like the latter than the former. He was scrupulously neat and well turned out, and his carefully brushed hair, very scanty on the top, and his ruddy clean-shaven face, gave him far more the air of big business than of the law. His expression and manner were very kindly and hearty, except for the eyes, which were curiously cold, dull, and hard, so that when one noticed them, which was not at first because he habitually avoided one's gaze, they were quite a surprise, and gave his countenance the effect of a mask, with an entirely different person looking out from behind it. He shook hands with Macleod and Tim very cordially, and begged them to be seated; then he stood upon the hearth rug, with his shoulders against a stone mantelpiece carved with armorial bearings, a most imposing background against which he looked very well, and evidently knew it. This fireplace was in keeping with the furniture—all exceedingly handsome, and the exact opposite of Tim's preconceived ideas; had he been more sophisticated, he might have thought that the room looked more like the apartment of a successful actor-manager than the office of a solicitor.

"I have had a letter about you from your grandfather," said Mr. Haythornthwaite, holding up an envelope addressed in the General's thin continental script, heavily plastered with the censor's labels. "I have never had the pleasure of meeting the General, but we have had dealings together for so long that I feel quite an old friend. I trust you left him well? And your other guardian, Admiral Gonzalez?"

Tim reassured him on this point in suitable terms.

"I understand it is your intention to apply for a commission," he continued, turning over the letter. "Have you taken any steps in the matter, may I ask?"

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"Not so far," Tim replied, "but Mr. Macleod—"

"Ah, yes," interrupted the solicitor, turning his mechanical smile towards the tutor, "Mr. Macleod—?" His manner indicated in some subtle way his sense of the difference in status between the two, and both of them noticed it. Tim felt ill at ease; Macleod became more stiff and formal.

"Mr. Macleod," Tim continued, "thinks that he will be able to assist me in that, through a friend."

"Indeed? That is very satisfactory," commented Mr. Haythornthwaite, as if he had only just prevented himself from saying that it was remarkable. If he had intended to offer any assistance, he had evidently now decided not to waste it unnecessarily. "A little pushing from somebody in the right place expedites things a good deal, I believe. Your guardians instruct us to pay you what may be necessary for the time being, from the funds at our disposal. I think I may say that your affairs are in considerably better shape than might have been expected at the time of your father's death. I knew him very well —since boyhood, in fact; he was a remarkable man, but did not attend to business, I'm sorry to say. However, your guardians have always given us a very free hand, and we've effected considerable—repairs, shall I say? There are securities and securities, even when one's hands are tied by trusteeship." Tim listened to all this with little comprehension and less concern. He did not care very much whether his father had been a good man of business or not, nor how his affairs stood. He knew vaguely that he had sufficient money, but he had never in his life had to think of money at all in the way that most of us have to think of it, and so did not regard it as of great importance. "If you haven't opened an account at a bank yet, you can draw on us immediately, of course. Have you made the acquaintance of your uncle yet?"

Tim had a wild thought at first that Mr. Haythornthwaite meant, had he pawned anything? Then he recalled the fabulous uncle in Staffordshire, of whom he had

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vaguely heard. He had not given this relative a single thought, and admitted as much.

"Indeed? He is also our client, of course."

"Is he?" said Tim. "I thought he lived in the north of England somewhere."

"So he does. You haven't his address? I'll give it to you, in case it should be of use." Mr. Haythornthwaite knew all about the strained relations in the Staveley family, but they were not his affair; and he always made a point of doing such things as this, which resembled services but cost nothing. He sat down at his desk and scribbled on a slip of paper. Tim wondered idly why a man who lived in the north of England should have a solicitor in London. He did not realize his grandfather's —old Tom Staveley's—distaste for having a "jumped-up young beggar from round about" poking his nose into the family affairs. He took the paper without much enthusiasm, and Mr. Haythornthwaite rang the bell.

"I will introduce you to our cashier now," he said. "Whenever you wish to draw any funds just see him. Of course, if I can be of service—Boy! Send Mr. Cridge! —at any time, please command me. I must say I envy you your present circumstances; you will like army life, as I am sure I would have done, if I had been young enough. My son has been in it since the start," said Mr. Haythornthwaite with paternal pride. "He's been overseas since January. He likes the life very well." As Haythornthwaite junior was A.D.C. to a client of his father's, one of the reputed two hundred odd general officers who had established themselves in Cairo, this was not remarkable. "Ah! Here is Mr. Cridge, our cashier. Mr. Cridge, this is Mr. Staveley, the son of our old friend Professor Staveley. And this is Mr.—er—Macleod. If you will be good enough, Mr. Cridge, to provide Mr. Staveley with funds whenever he may call upon us— Good-by, Mr. Staveley! Good-by, Mr. Macleod! Very happy to have made your acquaintance. Mr. Cridge will look after you now." Mr. Haythornthwaite smiled them out, and im-

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mediately made a note on his memorandum block to have a check kept on Master Tim's drawings, which, he had no doubt at all, would speedily become excessive.

Mr. Cridge, the cashier, was entirely in keeping with the Dickens tradition, at any rate. He was a desiccated, clean-shaven man of middle age, in a black frock-coat, and seemed to have turned a key on himself and then lost it. From first to last he performed his functions in dumb show. "Wemmick!" said Tim in an undertone to Macleod, as they went down the passage behind him. He paid Tim a satisfactory number of five pound notes, with obvious reluctance, flipping each one severely with his forefinger, as if admonishing it to behave as well as possible in such frivolous company, and bade them a mute good morning.

Macleod looked up at the office windows as they passed down the street. "That's a queer, vain, cold-blooded devil, Tim," he observed. "A humbug. Did you notice the bit of cant about joining the army? However, he's sharp enough, no doubt of that. Your affairs are in pretty shrewd hands."

Tim's mind was pleasantly occupied with the crackling notes in his pocket, and he paid very little attention to this remark. But he was to remember it in time to come.

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Captain Nicholls, the friend who would be able, so they hoped, to help Tim in his military aspirations, had been out in Chile with the commission of British officers adjudicating the boundary dispute between Chile and the Argentine, in which King Edward VII had been arbitrator. During the two years occupied by the work of the commission, Captain Nicholls had visited a good deal at the General's house, and Tim remembered him quite well, although he had been only a child at the time. Enquiry at the Service clubs disclosed that Captain Nicholls was now Colonel Nicholls, commanding a reserve battalion of an infantry regiment. An exchange of letters followed, and Colonel Nicholls expressed himself

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able and willing to assist Tim, much to the latter's satisfaction.

This correspondence occupied a week or so, which they filled up pleasantly enough in seeing the sights, and then, the future of his charge being thus arranged for, Mr. Macleod departed for Glasgow, where he had two spinster sisters. Though Tim accepted it at the time with the unthinking selfishness of adolescence, and it never occurred to the tutor's kindly heart, it must have been a considerable sacrifice on Mr. Macleod's part to devote the opening days of his first visit to England in so many years to looking after Tim, who felt grateful afterwards, at any rate. He watched Mr. Macleod's homely features, framed in the window of a smoking carriage on the Scotch express, recede from him as the train gathered way, and waved woodenly until he was out of sight. Then he went back to the hotel in low spirits, feeling very much an orphan. The last link which bound him to his home and his dead parents had snapped, and the constant daily companion of nearly half his life had gone.

The departure of Mr. Macleod brought Tim back to realities, which he had rather disregarded in the pleasant excitements of the last few weeks, with a jerk. Things had gone so smoothly and easily from one step to the next, in the familiar company of the tutor, that it had been impossible not to look upon this adventure as an exceptionally agreeable holiday. But now, as he sat solitary in the hotel lounge after dinner, experimenting manfully with a mild cigar, it came home to Tim with sobering clearness that there was to be no return, no going back in a little time to the familiar home to tell them all about it, and that he was embarked, alone, on possibly perilous waters for an unknown shore at an uncertain distance. Even Mr. Macleod, who had made him promise to write if he wanted advice, would soon be in the grip of alien forces, and no longer a free agent to stand behind him. Incredible thought! Macleod had been the first of the human suns round which Tim's life revolved, just as Colonel Nicholls

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was to be the second, and he was not then used to sudden alterations in his cosmos. Temporarily, it made the world seem rather dark.

But one is not much troubled by this sort of consideration at the age of eighteen, and as Tim whirled northwards in the train next day, through a landscape half hidden by showers of rain and full of early autumnal tints, he thought of nothing but the excitement of the present and the adventures in front of him. With the Colonel's letter in his pocket, he watched the outskirts of London, with their myriad suburban houses, falling behind, and the tale of miles growing longer in the advertisements of Liver Pills beside the line, until the train drew into the heart of England, rushing past great blocks of rectangular war hutments, drab manufacturing towns, and country stations still bright with flowers. He felt as if Chile and all his previous life had been a dream. As he looked out of the window he was conscious of a curious sense of intimacy with all he saw; one thing was certain in a world of shifting circumstances—that this was the country to which he belonged.

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## CHAPTER XII

### *THE PATRIOT'S PROGRESS*

WHEN one writes about the war, it is difficult not to let one's pen slip into the unprofitable ink of criticism. The private soldier who wrote tersely: "Dear mother: This war's a beggar"; the distinguished generals who have proved to the tune of fat volumes that the particular catastrophes for which they were discredited were due not to their own muddling but that of their fellows; novelists, poets, politicians, all of us who have a tendency to spoil good paper, seem in a conspiracy to find no good in the way Great Britain—ourselves excepted—managed the thing. We made mistakes, of course, and some of us were not exactly disinterested patriots, whether in uniform or out of it; but if for a change one glances at the mistakes of other nations at the same game, one comes to the astonishing conclusion that, for the poor weak human vessels that they are, the British did not do so badly after all. One feels diffident about making such an astounding statement, but there it is.

In depicting any aspect of Britain at war, therefore, one can only paint things as they were, blaming nobody, and leaving it to posterity—if it chooses to bother itself, which is not likely—to take example therefrom for next time. This, then, was how, after fifteen months of the greatest war in history, the British Empire—which, as you may remember, provides no scope, as a whole, for daylight saving—went about the selection of those who were to lead its legions in battle.

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Turning aside from the pot-holes and puddles of a country road, after a damp walk of a mile from the tram system of a dingy northern manufacturing town, through



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the battered remains of a hedge which only eighteen months before had surrounded a rich meadow, Tim Staveley advanced upon that depressing war creation, Moorhen Camp. It was a quarter to ten in the morning of a muggy November day, and as he proceeded balls of clay gathered under the soles of his boots, testifying to the excellent arable properties of the vanished meadow. Passing between the first of the huts with confidence, his pace soon retarded to a doubtful stroll. Moorhen Camp was not a large specimen of those mushroom towns of matchboarding, which rose as it were in the night and have since vanished like a dream, but it housed two thousand men; Tim felt rather at a loss in it. His neat civilian suit seemed out of place amongst so much khaki, and he shrank from addressing the warriors whom he observed scratching themselves and cleaning equipment at the doors of the huts. However, he nerved himself up to do this, and was instructed to repair to the guard-room at the other side of the camp, with many technical directions and in a broad Lancashire accent which fell a little awkwardly on his South American ear.

At that hour of the day the first parades were over, and the troops were distributed upon the day's business; the only men about the lines were the fatigue parties, the light-duty men, and the recently dismounted Old Guard (which even Tim's inexpert eye did not mistake for Napoleon's). He came out from between the black rows of hutments, to a wide parade-ground, cinder-paved, and had no difficulty in identifying the long hut housing the battalion offices, guard-room, and cells. A sentry was pacing up and down in front of this building in the prescribed soldierly fashion (slightly emphasized by his knowledge that the Commanding Officer was inside), and as he halted, turned to his front, and ordered his arms in a succession of galvanic jerks, Tim asked diffidently for the colonel.

The sentry took not the least notice of him, and his gaze remained fixed on the far horizon. "'Ey, sarge!"

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he called out, without turning his head. There was a sound of a pair of iron-shod feet coming to a concrete floor, and a rattle of equipment from within the guard-room. The sergeant of the guard looked out of the door. "What's up?" he enquired.

"Fellow wants the C.O."

"Can't see 'im now, sir," said the sergeant, turning his gaze on Tim. "'E's in Orderly Room."

"But he wrote to me to be here at this time."

"Oh," remarked the sergeant, obviously thinking very little of this. "Well, 'e's in Orderly Room."

Having thus disposed of the matter he prepared to retire again.

"Couldn't you—hadn't I better send in my name?" asked Tim, feeling exactly like a drowning man watching a boat row away.

"You couldn't very well do that, sir," said the sergeant, much scandalized, and added, with the air of one who explains everything: "You see, 'e's in Orderly Room."

This fact—whatever it might imply—was getting well home to Tim's intelligence. "Well, what ought I to do?" he asked.

The sergeant considered. "You better wait," he said at length. "'E'll be coming out when 'e's finished this morning's defaulters. You can catch 'im then. There's the groom with 'is 'orse."

Tim waited accordingly on the concrete veranda, acutely conscious of his civilan self beneath the curious glances of the surrounding military. After a while somebody began to throw bread at him from a glassless and barred window behind his back, and he moved away out of range; deprived of this diversion, the thrower began a clog-dance. Tim observed this assailant and his associates lurking within, and they were not his idea of a battalion headquarters staff, for such he presumed them to be. Actually they were the prisoners in the cells, outlaws who feared not the colonel neither regarded the military police.

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Facing the other end of the long veranda was ranked a double row of men, who waited in uneasy silence with their hands behind their backs, as if manacled—in the position, that is, known to the military mind as "at ease." Now and again a particularly spruce and fierce-looking warrior, whom Tim afterwards came to know for the regimental sergeant-major, emerged from a door after the manner of a stage executioner, with two assistants. On each successive appearance he barked out a name, and one of the morose-looking crew jerked nervously to attention, stepped forward between the attendant couple, and in response to a further command removed his hat, with its invariable content of cigarette cards and correspondence, placing this carefully upon the floor. Then all tramped rhythmically within, taking an unnecessary number of steps and lifting their knees like children playing horses. At each repetition of this ceremony, Tim could hear the murmur of some ritual inside, and a high nasal voice raised in wrath; in due course the offender would reappear, looking shaken.

A person of anemic and clerky seeming, with a pen behind one ear and hands full of papers, emerged upon the veranda.

"Liver?" enquired the sentry from the corner of his mouth, without looking away from his front.

"My God!" replied the clerk, shuddering. "Chronic! You should've 'eard 'im when I gave 'im the wrong army form!"

After a while the last of the prisoners had dreed his weird, and Tim was left in lonely isolation. He was trying to summon up courage to enter and declare himself, when the door opened once more and two officers appeared. One was a spare, spruce captain of about thirty. The other, an older man, Tim correctly deduced to be Colonel Nicholls, disrespectfully known to his command as Nutty Nicholls, who was to be the center of his universe for the next eight months.

Colonel Nicholls was a tall, heavily-built man of middle

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age, with a reddish mustache and hair which grew in tufts over his ears, and a long freckled face and big teeth like a horse. He was not a product of Sandhurst, having entered the army by the back door of the Militia. Before he had adopted the military profession he had roughed it about the world a good deal, and he could knock up a table, cook a dinner to set on it, eat the same, and wash up afterwards, with the skill of a backwoodsman. He was slightly deaf in one ear, and no man ever made better use of such a defect. He controlled a motley and unwieldy command with ability and unconcern, and made a hobby of some ducks, which he kept in a pond in front of the Orderly Room. Old subalterns of his, all the world over, always asked a new arrival first of all: "Well, and how are Nutty's ducks?" Nutty and the ducks fought a bitter fight against water-rats, and in spite of the whole force of the military machine these latter won continual victories, and made the colonel swear consumedly.

The two officers stood for a moment in talk and then the captain saluted and went indoors again. The colonel turned to the sentry. "Seen any rats?" he enquired.

"No, sir."

"You take care they don't get any of those ducklings. Orderly!" The groom, who had been walking a charger up and down opposite the sentry-box, led it across, and the colonel proceeded to mount. Tim realized that it was now or never. He advanced hastily. "Colonel Nicholls?" he said deferentially, touching the officer on the knee.

"Hey?" replied the latter, turning round.

"Colonel Nicholls?" repeated Tim.

"That's me."

"My name is Staveley, sir. You were good enough to give me an appointment for this morning."

"Hey? Staveley? So I did, begad. I'd forgotten all about you." He swung down from the saddle, and regarded his visitor with a kindly twinkle. "Staveley, hey? Come inside," he continued, leading the way into the office.

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"Begad, last time I saw you, young man, you were in your bath, playing with a rubber duck."

An orderly, who was arranging papers, withdrew, apparently much moved by this intelligence.

"And how's your grandfather? Still flourishing? Begad, I'm glad he's too old to fight against us! And those young cousins of yours—what's become of them?"

"They're both in the army now, sir—the German army, of course. Kurt—you remember Kurt?—has got the Iron Cross."

"Stout lad! That's a queer go, isn't it? You'll have to out 'em if you meet 'em. Well, now, what is it you want? A commission, hey? Right! I'll give you a commission. Only too glad to give one to a gentleman. The Sixth Battalion has just sent me twenty officers, and half of 'em are hairdresser's assistants, by the look of 'em. Can't think what their Colonel's been about. Give me one of those forms, Everard."

The captain who had been on the veranda—he was, of course, the adjutant—rose from his seat at a table at the other end of the sparsely furnished room, fumbled in a drawer and laid a long blue form before the colonel. "Here you are," said the latter. "I'll sign it first, and you can take it away to fill up. Just put in the answers you think they'd like to have. Never mind about the exact facts—there's very little truth about in war time, and you want to economize it where possible. You'll need the signature of a J.P., too. If you don't know any, I should sign that bit Smith or Jones, with your left hand. There must be thousands of 'em. Then—oh, yes! You'll have to be medically examined. Orderly!"

A soldier sprang through the door like a jack-in-the-box, and stood woodenly to attention.

"Take this gentleman across to the M.O.," said the colonel. He signed the form, blotted it, and held it out. "There, catch hold. Your commission should be through in a week or so, and I shall be glad to have you here. We

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must have a yarn some time about Chile—I've not forgotten your grandmother's *cazuela*. Now I must run. Got to see my knock-kneed recruits and shirking subalterns. Not at all! Glad to get a good officer. Morning!"

He shook hands, and strode out to his horse. Tim, somewhat dazed by the rapidity of these proceedings, set off in constrained silence with the orderly. "You'll be after a commission, sir?" remarked the latter, after a while.

Tim admitted this.

"We 'as a lot of gentlemen 'ere after commissions," continued the orderly. "Some gets 'em; some don't. The C.O., 'e's a bit 'ard to please. 'E turned wan gentleman down because 'e brushed 'is hair back. This is the Medical 'Ut, sir."

Tim's only previous experience of the medical profession had been Dr. Kuhn, and wholesale doctoring was strange to him. The army, it appeared, did not go in for private consultations; a long line of soldiery stretched through the door of the Medical Hut, exhibiting their sores like so many *lazzaroni*. The doctor, with no sign of ever having had such a thing as a bed-side manner, was engaged upon his healing office. No doubt an advocate of auto-suggestion, his treatment consisted, nine times out of ten, in a loud, firm, clear assurance that the patient had nothing whatever the matter with him, and would inevitably be put under arrest if he appeared there again.

"What's this?" he inquired, pleasantly enough, as civilian Tim touched his suspended professional suavity. "The C.O. wants you examined? Would you mind waiting until I've ticked off these skrimshankers? I shan't be long."

A tall thin corporal, with a Red Cross brassard on his arm, flung open a door. "This way, sir," he remarked. "You can wait in here."

The room, or cubicle rather, was furnished with some wooden boxes and a hospital stretcher, supporting a bed of dark-hued blankets. There was nothing else to sit

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on, so Tim sat on this bed. The asbestos walls were decorated with a number of photographs of ladies, and Tim could only suppose that if these were members of the medical officer's family, they had chosen a very hot day to have their portraits taken. Afterwards he found that he had misjudged the doctor, who was a civilian practitioner from the neighborhood; the waiting-room was the corporal's *boudoir*.

Tim was left alone for a very long time, until, in fact, the alluring curves of the corporal's art gallery had lost all power to charm, and he had got heartily tired of looking out of the window at a strip of mud and the stove-pipe of the next hut, and watching the rain-drops chase one another along the electric light cables which ran on china insulators from roof to roof. For a while he was diverted by the corporal's dispensation of remedies on the other side of the partition, which, as far as sound was concerned, might as well not have existed. He did not know then as much about army doctoring as he subsequently learned, but he gathered from the monotonous chant of "Number nine, sir? Yes, sir," that the merciful art of Aesculapius centered, for military purposes, round one bottle.

At last, when he had kicked his heels in this *oubliette* for close upon two hours, his impatience overcame his natural reluctance to obtrude himself upon the ceremonies of military life. A lull seemed to have occurred in the activities without, and he opened the door. He found the doctor minus his white coat, in the act of putting on his hat to go. The medical corporal, smoking a cigarette, was filling in a long buff form at a side-table. Both functionaries stared at Tim much as the audience regards the white rabbit that has just appeared under the conjurer's wand. "By George!" said the doctor, hanging up his hat again. "I really beg your pardon. I had forgotten you completely."

After a morning spent in military circles Tim was getting tolerably well used to his insignificance. Every-

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body seemed to overlook him with the greatest ease. He produced his blue form.

"I haven't had one of these before," observed the doctor. "What have I got to do with it, corporal?"

The corporal removed his cigarette with some difficulty from his upper lip, and balanced it carefully on the edge of the table. "Gotter sign it, sir," he said succinctly.

"No doubt, but—oh, here it is. 'I hereby certify—,' and so on, and so on. H'm, h'm. Oh, dear!" He looked up deprecatingly.

"What's the trouble, sir?" asked the corporal.

"I'm afraid I can't examine you after all," said the doctor to Tim. "I'm only doing deputy for Captain Twentyman, the regular M.O. He's sick. I'm not an R.A.M.C. man, and this has to be signed by an army doctor."

Tim endeavored not to look annoyed. "Well, who can examine me?" he asked.

"Where had he better go to, corporal?"

The corporal gave the impression of having an excellent idea, but of being too polite to suggest it.

"What about Blowford Barracks?" said the doctor.

The corporal grudgingly admitted that there might be something in this.

"You'd better try Blowford, then," continued the doctor, turning to Tim. "Do you know this part of the world? No? Well, it's two stations down the line. Good morning! Sorry I can't be of use."

Tim went out into the sodden camp fully convinced that Kitchener was right, and that it was going to be a long war.

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He had no difficulty in finding Blowford Barracks, where a very busy R.A.M.C. captain held a stethoscope to his bosom with one hand, while he went on writing with the other, very much as if he expected a trunk call from the seat of Tim's affections. Evidently the result of these communings with his interior were satisfactory,

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for the captain dropped the stethoscope and grabbed for the blue form. "Heart's all right," he remarked. "Got any varicose veins or anything?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Oh, well, we won't worry to look. Soon know about 'em if you had. Army life'll build you up a lot. Good morning!"

It now only remained for Tim to obtain the signature of a Justice of the Peace, since he was not sufficiently hardened to adopt Colonel Nicholl's suggestion. On his return to London he had no difficulty in getting this dealt with through the good offices of his solicitors, and he sealed up his completed blue form—to which he had grown quite attached, after having gone through so much in its company—and dropped it into the letter box, hoping for the best.

The long delays which had been the lot of the would-be officer at the beginning of the war were a thing of the past by that time; for one thing, the army had expanded enormously, and for another, the battle of Loos had given the War Office very liberal ideas with regard to the number of subalterns likely to be required by general officers still experimenting with unfamiliar conditions. Scarcely ten days elapsed before Tim received notice of his gazette, and he lost no time in going to a military outfitter, who supplied him with everything he could possibly require, and much more besides. The tailor was a quick worker, and soon Tim was walking abroad (with his Sam Browne on the wrong hook behind), taking the salutes of private soldiers, and saluting in his turn—though with less assurance—those whom he took to be his betters. As he was quite ignorant of the badges of rank he adopted the expedient of saluting anybody who was of advanced years or had several medal ribbons, and on the whole this method worked very well, though he very much astonished several sergeant-majors and a commissionaire or two—he was, of course, not accustomed to commissionaires. . . .

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It never occurred to Tim to question this procedure, as was natural enough in a boy of his age; but when one looks back on those distant days it does certainly seem as if it might have struck some military authority that, the old Sandhurst method being inadequate for war needs, there were better ways of selecting an officer than by getting a tailor to dress somebody up as one at the instance of one of his friends, and then paying him for duties he did not know how to perform in the hope that he might, in God's good time, find out something about them. When it did dawn upon the military mind that there were alternative methods, a great number of those who would have made fine officers had been unable for one reason or another to get acquainted with colonels, and were consequently dead as privates, which was a pity; and others, who had found colonels, had found the wrong ones, so that experts of every sort were put to any kind of task, except the one they might have done best.

Neither, many months later, when a highly complimentary communication which began "To Our Trusty and well beloved Timothy Staveley, Greeting," and expressed the sovereign's especial Trust and Confidence in the Loyalty, Courage and Good Conduct of the aforesaid Timothy Staveley, arrived in his hands, did it occur to the recipient to wonder how his possession of these qualities had been divined. Had it done so, perhaps he might have thought, on looking round the Mess ante-room at Moorhen Camp, that there were other cases in which His Majesty had not made such a fortunate guess.

But the oddest thing of all about the entire system—or lack of it—in those early days was that in a quite incomprehensibly large number of cases it was just as successful as the most searching selection by merit could have been.

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## CHAPTER XIII

## *EDUCATION*

"NOW that's a pretty good report," said Captain Everard, the adjutant. "See if you can't keep it up. There are all sorts in a camp like this; try and steer clear of the duds." The adjutant sighed; he was keen on his work, but found it discouraging at times. "Do you understand, Staveley?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tim, standing rigidly to attention before him.

"As it is, you've saved yourself from being sent to a Young Officers' Company. Do you know what that is?"

"No, sir."

"Well, it's a combined infant school, inebriates' home, and prison. A very good place to keep out of. So you'll quite understand that while you're here it'll pay you to behave."

Tim, six weeks older, ten pounds heavier, and happy, no longer wore his Sam Browne on the wrong hook behind; by now he had acquired quite a smattering of the technicalities of his new career. He had not, it is true, so far encountered the nebulous soldiery he was supposedly to lead in battle—it was a long time before an officer, commissioned in 1915, did that. Except for salutes in the street, he had had no intercourse with private soldiers at all. But he had attended a five weeks' course of instruction at Cambridge, where he had learnt a little drill, something about a rifle and a bomb, how to read a map, and not to mistake the bandsmen of cinema theaters for major-generals.

In those Officers' Training Schools, then on the eve of their supersession by the new cadet schools, there still lingered the last existing vestiges of the spirit of the first days of the war—that ardor for a crusade which was to



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be half a holiday. The average age of the subalterns taking the course was twenty years; ninety per cent. of them had seen no active service. They yearned for one thing only, with a quite unshakable naïve self-confidence—to get "out." Most of them dreamed shy dreams (which they would have died rather than have confessed to) of winning honor on the field; they thought of coming home with medals, little knowing that all the decorations were already utterly debauched, so that there were only two crosses which still meant anything in the eyes of the initiated—the Victoria and the Wooden. The small percentage of men who had come back from the front, with their pessimism and frank reluctance to a second dose, were regarded by the others with a mixture of respect, suspicion, and amazement. It was scarcely possible to criticize men who had been "out there" when one hadn't been "out there" one's self; otherwise one might have said that they were cold-footed and bad form. The general secret reflection was: "No doubt the great adventure has proved too much for sorry fellows like these, but wait till *I* get there."

Such was the sentiment which still dwelt in a rapidly dwindling number of bosoms, soon to die out completely, leaving behind a memory which was a bitter mockery. The cadet schools of the later part of the war did not possess it; there were too many old soldiers in them, and the fresh blood knew too much about things. Not for many years shall we see again quite that kind of highly courageous innocence, that pathetically gallant attitude to life, which persisted in idealizing into a field of high endeavor the machine-made shambles of modern war. In many ways it was a foolish attitude; certainly it was unsophisticated. The young men of to-day, with elder brothers killed and maimed and blinded, naturally do not possess it, and the new generation, children of prematurely aged fathers, growing up in hard times, will not possess it either. But those boys of 1914 and 1915, born in the midst of wealth and security such as the world had never

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before dreamed of, and which has become once more a dream, could only see in the mechanics of their own destruction adventure and romance. They thought that they were privileged to join in high emprise with paladins, in which, of course, some (but always the other fellow—nobody really believed that he could be killed at the beginning, just as nobody could conceive the possibility of coming through towards the end) would be killed; they thought that when all was over, and they had marched to Berlin, they would return to a grateful country, and that ever afterward they would live with the respect of their fellow men for what they had done. Indeed, how were they to know better? They were young, and they read the papers.

Some of them died in these beliefs. Others returned, and now are wiser.

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It was a great time, that five weeks at Cambridge. Tim never quite touched such a high note again.

They were billeted in the quarters of the vanished undergraduates—the late tenant of the sitting-room that Tim shared with five others had been a medical student, as certain charts of viscera and vertebrae in the writing desk still deposed, and Tim used to speculate upon where he was now, and what he was doing: not knowing, of course, that some sun-dried desiccated bones and scraps of cloth, and a pair of bleached boots, in a *dere* in Gallipoli, were all that remained of him. The weather was bright, hard, and frosty that November, and they would come in after a day's drill on the fields of the Leys School or the University Football Club, or a field operation on the Gog-Magogs, change into slacks, go forth in fine ravenous trim to tea at Buol's on the King's Parade, and sit satisfactorily tired through the evening's lecture afterwards.

The men who shared his billet were all young and keen, and there were no hard cases amongst them; nobody got more than cheerfully drunk, or gambled overmuch, or passed "stumer" checks. They included a Canadian, who

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continued to wear at first the maple-leaf and wide breeches; a South African, who was half a Boer, but wholly a good fellow, whom they knew as De Wet and upbraided for occupying more than his ration of the settee—which he could not help, for Dutch blood will out in this particular way; an ex-quartermaster-sergeant of Territorials, just returned from Quetta; an ex-corporal of the Royal Naval Division; and two other new recruits like Tim himself. At night, when pipes were going and the kettle singing on the fire, they would talk that peculiar full rich talk which was almost the only virtue of the war; peace-time knows it not, for never can you get quite so many good fellows of such varied ways of life all together at the same time as you did then; and Tim drank it all in joyously, contributing his part, and thought what a fine thing the war was. He had always liked conversation.

When duties allowed, Tim would tramp about the town in his hob-nailed army boots, with one or another of these good companions, seeing more beauty than he had ever imagined. The venerable loveliness of the ancient buildings sank sensuously into his being; at every turn there was something to excite his interest and his admiration. He found again an overlaid regret for his postponed university career; he felt an intense longing to possess all this beauty for four whole years—eternity. Well, when the war was over, which it must be in another year at most. . . . And then he would do some of the sketches for which his fingers itched; at present he had not much time, and the weather was too severe.

Incidentally, his youthful zeal and still scholastic habit of mind obtained for him without great effort the very good report to which Captain Everard had referred.

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While Tim was at Cambridge the first letter from Chile arrived. It seemed to Tim like receiving communications from another planet.

The General wrote in quite a cheerful vein—he had

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been much heartened by the Salonica landing, which he considered to have canceled the moral obloquy attaching to his side over the Belgium business. "We have not yet had any word from you except the cable announcing your safe arrival, but we expect to get a letter from day to day. Recently we have been much preoccupied about Fritz. About a week after you left we had word that he had been posted to a Jäger battalion, and almost at once came a cable from the Roepkes to say that he was wounded (in the Pripet marshes, we have since heard). The cable was very laconic, and as you may suppose we were all very anxious, and your Aunt Olga was in a great state. Fortunately your grandmother took the view that it was all a mistake, and that it could not be *our* Fritz. However, we hear that he is in hospital at Hanover, and going on well, so that is satisfactory.

"Otto Kuhn has been wounded again, this time fatally, at Ypres. Poor Dr. Kuhn! He was so proud of Otto." Tim looked up from his grandfather's fine hand with a feeling of shock as he read this; Otto Kuhn was the first of his personal friends to be killed in the war. He remembered Dr. Kuhn's jolly red face, and imagined it blanched and stricken. By Gad! It wasn't all a sporting adventure, this war. Tim remembered Otto in a hundred circumstances; at Tant' Helene's, six years old; playing blind man's buff at children's parties; a satcheled schoolboy at the German school. Poor Dr. Kuhn! That unconcealed paternal pride, at which one had been rather inclined to smile, what a pathos it acquired now!

"You remember Clarissa, the housemaid," went on the letter, "who left us two years ago to get married? She has just had *triplets,* and your grandmother has been very occupied trying to do something for them all. They live in a *rancho* on the Cerro Cordillera; just two rooms and no conveniences at all. It is dreadful to think of little children in such places; I have never got used to it, for all my long life out here. I suppose there are slums at home,

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but not so many, and one does not see them. If we could declared war on such things as that, there would be more sense in it.

"The weather has been uncommonly hot for so early—" Tim looked out of the window at the frosty rime on the *façade* of the Science Schools opposite, and could not withhold a slight pang of homesickness, "—and last Sunday we all went to the Silver Lake. I am afraid old Guaton the coachman is taking to drink; he is very shabby and red about the eyes now." (Above this was inserted, evidently just before posting, with the General's scrupulous sense of justice: "To-day shaved and cleaner.")

"I hope the excellent Macleod has been able to get in touch with Captain Nicholls, and that you are successfully established. He also, I trust, has been able to find some suitable war service. We think a great deal about you, my dear boy, and long for the day when we shall see you and your cousins once more. Look after yourself; remember no medal is worth anything to a dead soldier. We are all well, except perhaps your grandmother, who finds getting about very hard work nowadays."

Mr. Macleod also wrote from camp at Nigg. He had been unable to get a commission because of his asthma, and so had joined the Cameronians as a private; with recruiting so bad they had made no bones about taking him into the ranks. So far his asthma had not troubled him, but there were ominous signs, and he hoped to be sent East rather than to the French front. Even the death of Otto Kuhn did not bring home the war to Tim quite so much as this pencil note scribbled in a canteen, headed 11538 Pte. A. Macleod. It seemed incredible to him that this brief arrangement of numbers was all that, to the military machine, so much knowledge and capacity and integrity mattered.

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Moorhen Camp, as the adjutant had hinted, was a very different proposition to Cambridge.

The vital spark had abandoned those timbered camps

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when the New Army, which had sung and sworn its way into being beneath their leaky roofs, had gone down the road to that bourne from which it was never to return. They were like a kitchen garden after the vegetables have been uprooted; nothing remained but the gaps where these had been, and the diseased and unwholesome specimens that were not worth taking; here and there, gardeners were planting out seedlings of varying degrees of promise.

Moorhen Camp, of course, had never housed Kitchener's Army, for the 3rd Royal West Pennines—which was the name of Colonel Nicholls' command—was a Special Reserve battalion. But the process of deterioration had been similar. The motley battalion of reservists had been mobilized at the outbreak, and had come to the colors under the impression that the battalion would go out as a whole, as it had done in the South African war. The reservists had not seen the war quite as Kitchener's men saw it, but they had a certain sturdy *esprit de corps.* After a battle or two, however, it was realized that Sandhurst and the depot were not going to be sufficient to supply the needs of the 2nd battalion—the 1st was in India—and the 3rd Royal West Pennines was converted into a recruiting center. From it went drafts of officers and men; to it came new recruits and new subalterns—and also the wastage of war. Returned wounded, the flat-footed, the inefficient, the drunken, the aged, the cowardly—everybody, officer or man, whom the fighting battalions could not bother with for any reason, laudable or otherwise, drifted to the 3rd battalion. And towards the end of 1915 the voluntary system of enlistment, which had long before diminished to a feeble trickle of recruits, dried up altogether, while the Government, torn by the fear of losing the vote of one party or another, and yet seeing that something must be done immediately, was endeavoring to evade the fatal word conscription by urging on Lord Derby to make promises on their behalf which they afterwards conveniently forgot.

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In January 1916, therefore, such places as Moorhen Camp were at their lowest ebb.

To begin with, there were not more than four hundred "other ranks" all told in the camp, and these comprised every variety of the sick, halt, and blind. On the other hand, there were fully a hundred officers, most of them surplus subalterns, the fat-stock for a devil's broth not yet fully prepared, which was to be known as the Somme. These were various in their origins, but most of them came from New Army battalions of the regiment, which, before proceeding overseas, had disembarrassed themselves of the officers supernumerary to their establishments. Many of these were frankly dregs, and the others were disgruntled at being left with those who were. The officers whom the colonel had appointed personally were quite lost in the crowd.

The distracted adjutant could not find very much for so many hands to do; on parade the officers nearly outnumbered the men. So they were set to various courses of instruction, and drilled interminably imaginary companies consisting of eight men and four long ropes. Most of them had been doing these things since the outbreak of war, and to say that they no longer viewed them with enthusiasm is understating it. They wavered between indifference and insubordination, took French leave when possible, or cut parade and played "vingty" in their huts. It was not that they were too many for what lay ahead, but they had been commissioned prematurely and haphazard, and there was nothing whatever to fill up the period of waiting. And there was nothing personally wrong with these young men who were yawning their quota of the innumerable wasted hours of war; they were beginning to find out the difference between the reality and that first fine dream, that was all.

It must be admitted that the subalterns were not set a very high example by the seniors, either. The battalion had, it is true, Nutty Nicholls and Captain Everard, who strove manfully with their motley and ever-changing

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charge. There, however, assets ceased and liabilities began.

At the beginning of the war, when officers three days commissioned were drilling, out of little red books, recruits enlisted that morning, the War Office had raked up, from club armchairs and the retreats of Cheltenham and Bournemouth, all sorts of superannuated warriors, on the principle that in the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king. The war press, which was then in the initial laudatory stage, made many complimentary remarks about "these very gallant gentlemen, leaving their well-earned retirement after a life already spent" and so on. Such purpose as ninety per cent. of these veterans had served was over in three months, but as the Regulations had never been framed to meet such a contingency as this there seemed to be no way of getting rid of them again. Having reached the unexpected Valhalla of full pay and allowances, the old gentlemen clung to them with the tenacity of age. They were quite prepared to occupy armchairs in mess ante-rooms until they died.

Thus at Moorhen Camp there was Major Kettlewell, a decrepit old gentleman who had been a colonel once and was aggrieved that his country would not allow him to be one again. He resembled a rather blurred portrait of the late Lord Roberts, and was seldom seen about before lunch. And there was Major Murgatroyd, an enormously fat man, who could have entered no trench ever dug—not that he wanted to, or even pretended to want to, for at least he was no hypocrite. He devoted his time to his stomach, and successfully guttled his way into the grave before the end of the war, dying with his drawn pay in his hand.

Besides these there were what the French called the *degommés*—those whose cowardice had not been quite sufficient for a firing party, or whose chuckle-headedness was not pronounced enough to have got them court-martialed. With these examples before them, it was not unnatural that, in these months of waiting in which there

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was so much boredom and so little that seemed to matter, the attention of the subalterns was mainly directed upon the delights and distractions of the local manufacturing town.

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Tim shared a cubicle in a long-subdivided hut with a small, black-haired, pucklike youth called Short, who was about five years his senior in age, and fifty in the ways of the world. Before the war Short had been an apprentice engineer in a great shipyard on the Mersey, and a sapper in a Territorial Engineer company, with which he had been mobilized, and from which he had been commissioned. Tim was by no means ignorant of what may be termed stable knowledge—no one brought up in a country like Chile, where the people of the land are remarkably frank and ingenuous in their morals, could very well be so; but Short's knowledge of the seamy side of the barrack gate filled him with amusement and admiration. Sprawling in his shirt-sleeves on his camp bed, the diminutive Impudence would retail worldly wisdom with expressive Rabelaisian simile, while Tim, much diverted, sucked at the pipe he was trying to master and listened, sometimes stretching out an automatic hand for his pencil to sketch his companion's ugly little features, as his talk carried him away and they twisted with sardonic mirth. There was something of Ortheris about Short, something of D'Artagnan, and something of Quilp, with a touch of Quasimodo.

"I remember when I was in camp at Tidworth Pennings in 1912—" he would begin. Or "When I was at Fort Temple Brady there was a sergeant we had—" And then would follow the uproariously unprintable.

Of his own current amours he was more reticent, as becomes an expert—in just such a way as a Rugby International admits that he plays a little football, but no more. The reputation of his paramour of the moment, if she had any, was safe with Short. "I'm not one of these fellers that go advertisin' who they were with last night," he was

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wont to observe with a mirthful snakelike flicker of his black eye. "Besides, if I *can* do a bit of square-pushin', I don't think I invented it, like some of the silly young beggars round this camp." But he had no objection to disclosing past conquests.

It was impossible to regard the outrageous little Lothario with anything but a tolerant eye; he was too funny. And besides, he had ever so many good qualities, which many of those who outvied him in his private pastime did not possess; it was his mercurial sense of fun which led him into amatory adventure, and no brutal animalism.

"But what I don't understand," remarked Tim one evening after tea, sitting cross-legged on his bed and working with water-colors, the while his companion discoursed of Life, "is how you manage to come to the point. You English people, with your queer contradictory ways, are beyond me. Now in South America you know where to find these things, if you want them—not that I ever did—and when you go there they know what you've come for. Quite easy. But—"

"I know," interrupted Short, with a nod. "Like in France. Red Lamp Street."

"That's it. But how you can tackle one of these girls from the neighborhood—supposedly respectable girls—"

"Well, there are professionals, o' course, in the town," said the experienced Short, "and then there are sort of semis—for the duration, you know—that you pick up in hotel lounges and cafés. They're shoppies mostly. But the ones round here, that hang round the station on fine evenings with bicycles, waiting to click, they're daughters o' clerks and small tradesmen mostly. They've got the time, and they're not looked after like richer people's daughters. If you prefer *that* sort you've got to get engaged to 'em, and that's about all there is doing. They'll get engaged to you, though, without hardly knowing what your name is in war time. I knew a feller who was engaged to three—"

"Quite so," continued Tim. "But as I say, how you

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can go to a girl of that sort, and suggest—well, I mean—you know—"

Short, supine upon his bed, rolled a gleeful eye and snickered just like a mule that has succeeded in kicking somebody. "You've got to feel your way along," he observed, "but you don't often go wrong in these days. In peace time it's different, o' course. None of these girls would think o' letting chaps they knew—fellers they'd grown up with—mess 'em about like they do officers. And the chaps wouldn't think of tryin' it on with girls from round their homes, either—not that they'd get the chance if they were livin' at home, with their families watchin' everythin' they did. But with things as they are—all the fellers thinkin' they may be killed, and not caring a jigger what they do, and the girls filled up with this patriotic stuff—and besides, all their own friends are gone, and they're only goin' to be young once—and everybody with the brakes off—well, what do you expect? It's just the war."

"I suppose it is," said Tim, engrossed in his work. It did not occur to either of them, not being angels, to weep.

. . . . . .

Stevens, the subaltern from the next cubicle, lounged in pipe in mouth, glanced over Tim's shoulder, and exploded into mirth. "Great Scott, Staveley," he chuckled. "That's damn good! No, don't take it away, you fool. Let's have a look. Hi, Jones! Jones!"

"Look out, you idiot, you'll smudge it," growled Tim. "I hadn't intended Short to know until I'd finished the whole twelve, and I've only done five—"

"What's all this?" said Short, swinging his little legs to the floor and assuming the defensive.

Stevens and his room-mate Jones hung over Tim's shoulders in paroxysms of helpless mirth. "Look at this!" sobbed Jones. " 'Short and the Mayor's daughter.' Look at it, I ask you! You *fool,* Staveley!"

There can be no higher tribute to a humorist than that.

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"Have you been takin' liberties with me, damn you?" said Short, grinning, and making a grab for the book.

"No you don't," bubbled Stevens, frustrating him. "Keep off! Turn back a page, Joney. Short-hairs, if you don't keep off I'll slay you. Isn't it enough that you've been immortalized by the brush of a master? . . . Look at this one where he's going up a ladder!" Tim's utterly indescribable but extremely funny pictorial selections from the career of the diminutive one had represented all his loves as on the massive side. "How the hell do you do it, Staveley? That *is* Short. Has he been posing for you in the nude?"

"No. I've had to catch him washing, and it's been a devil of a job too."

"I'll have your blood for this," threatened Short, dancing about at arm's length and peeping at the guarded sketchbook. "That's what comes o' tryin' to improve the minds of you young fellers—"

"For God's sake mind that next page," cried Tim. "There! Now you've smudged it."

"Never mind. You can do more—lots more. Can't he, Joney? He can—he must!" The weeping Stevens cast himself upon the wrathful Short, and they fell together on the latter's camp bed, which immediately gave way. Tim seized the opportunity of the ensuing confusion to lock up his imperiled color box in a suitcase.

Short sat up after an interval and straightened his disheveled clothing. "Well, there's only one thing for it, after you fellers have been takin' liberties with my character," he remarked. "The insult can only be washed out in beer. I shall take you all out to dinner, and *you* shall pay."

"Done!" said Jones, drying his eyes. "It's cheap at the price."

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Clad in slacks and the prohibited Oxford shoes, the four subalterns, with three other casual travelers, passed

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the saluting sentry at the camp gate and piled themselves into a battered touring car, which was accustomed to wait there for hire. The chauffeur cranked up his engine, and the overladen vehicle lumbered off into the gloom, its freight proclaiming, loudly and collectively, that only a year ago somebody had called them Baby Dolls.

The streets of Blackton, the local manufacturing town, were shrouded in official war-time darkness. The street lamps were painted over; the Town Hall clock was unilluminated; the shops presented drawn blinds, and only little transparencies with the word OPEN testified to the roaring trade going on inside. The dimmed pavements, however, were even more thronged than in time of peace, with men in khaki from the great temporary towns on the moors round about.

The car stopped in the market square, beside the statue of a famous soldier of a hundred years before. "Get off my knee, Shorty," grunted Jones. "Ugh, my leg's gone to sleep. Heavy little beast you are." He peered up at the dim effigy of the warrior of Badajos and Ciudad Rodrigo. "Who's the old duck up there, Stevens?"

"Don't know, old thing. Some back number," returned that child of the hour. "Where shall we go? The Imperial?"

"No," said Short. "In here. A quick one."

Lined up along the bar, amongst city men, flushed and forty, who were soon to hurry home to their wives to blame their tardiness on the war, they had several quick ones. "Now then!" cried Short. "Into file, left turn! Quick march!" They tramped out into the street, and he began to sing in time to the mail-shod feet:

"With me little wiggle-waggle in me hand
I jumped out *of* the window,
And upon my soul
Up a telegraph pole
I climbed like a monkey with a face as black as coal;

Left wheel!

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When I got to the top
There was one thing I couldn't understand,
I was walkin' on the wire
With me shirt on fire
And me little wiggle-waggle in me hand.

Here we are!"

Tim, feeling very merry and flushed in the face, tramped with the others through a brightly-lit lounge, and into the big red-and-gold dining-room of the town's chief hotel. At dinner they drank much Burgundy, and they consumed the meal with the hearty goodwill of healthy boys who have been out all day in the open air. They flirted outrageously with the waitress, who hung fascinated round the party, and would not attend to her other tables at all, much to the rage of the commercial magnates dining at them—regular clients all, who addressed her by name, and were disgusted at such fickleness. But what chance had they, poor wretches? As the meal went on Tim felt more and more buoyant and witty, more so in fact than he had ever felt in his life. When they adjourned for coffee in the lounge, he found a little difficulty in controlling his legs as he rose from the table, which for some reason struck him as intensely amusing. He left a quite inordinate tip behind, as they did all; the waitress had known her business.

With the coffee they took double Benedictines and a cigar apiece. "Now what?" said Jones, as these were being consumed. "A music-hall?"

It was generally agreed that a music-hall would be a good idea. Stevens, however, had been looking round the room. "What about a bird or two?" he suggested. "I've been heliographing to that quartette over there."

After an interval of confusing cold night air Tim found himself in a box at a theater, witnessing the best—the very best—variety entertainment that had ever been put upon the boards. Sitting beside him was a damsel of great beauty and surprising understanding, whose name, it ap-

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peared, was Maudie. He was not quite clear as to how she had arrived there, but there she was. He took to Maudie; they got on like a house afire. Her identity was not confusing, like that of several other females—he was not sure how many—who had become attached to the party. In the interval he had two double whiskies, and felt impelled to tell the barmaid what a top-hole show it was in Spanish, French, German, Italian and also dog-Latin; he was supported in his conviction of the rare wit of this by the plaudits of his companions. Of the second half of the performance he could afterwards remember very little, except that it was really extraordinarily funny and brilliant.

At eleven o'clock the music hall disgorged them on to a damp pavement. It was drizzling slightly and very dark. "Taxis!" commanded Short of the commissionaire, slipping a coin into his hand. It was 1916, and there were still taxis.

"Yessir! Ow many, sir? Two, sir?"

"Two be damned. Can't you see that there are eight of us? Four. We've got to see these ladies home."

The man turned away with a knowing grin, and shortly Tim found himself alone in a taxi with Maudie. "Fall in at the Market Square in half an hour," said Short, as Tim stumbled in. "That is, if you're not going to make a night of it."

Tim's impressions were somewhat hazy, but he had an idea that they had already done that. He wanted to go back and tell Shorty so, but the taxi had gone on. He also felt very drowsy. But he bethought himself of his social duty, and turned to the girl at his side. "Where shall I tell'm to go to, Maudie?" he asked.

She was silent for a moment. It was Tim's first expedition of this sort, but it was not by any means hers, and this was a departure from the usual routine. "Hadn't he better drive round a little first?" she suggested. "There's nothing doing where I live, you know. I'm with another girl."

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"Eh? Just's you like," said Tim, missing in his muddled state the very plain significance of this. "Drive round if you want to, by all means. Cool night air very pleasant. Just tell me when you feel like going home."

She looked at him again in the gloom of the cab. "Oh, well, then—3 Adelaide Crescent's the address."

"Right you are!" said Tim, and managed, with a narrow escape from tumbling head over heels out of the window, to communicate this to the driver.

He saw her to her door, and watched her put the latch-key in the lock. "Good night!" she said, and waited.

"Good night!" replied Tim. "Thanks awfully for coming."

"Not a bit," she said. "It's been lovely." She heard the taxi drive away as she mounted the creaking shabby stairs to the third-floor attic which she shared with a girl from the ribbon counter of the town's chief drapery store. She was thinking deeply over a new experience, for there was a convention in such affairs as this; you received so much, and paid so much back—the amount varied according to your prudence, generosity, and inclination. She had too much confidence in her own good looks to feel at all insulted; it was not indifference, she knew. "Well, I never!" she remarked to herself in the glass. "First time that's happened to me. Paid for everything, and didn't even want to kiss me. But he did though—I saw his eyes in the theater. What a mug!" She took off her hat, and shook out a mass of fluffy fair hair; her attractive but rather calculating blue eyes softened a trifle. "A nice kid, though, all the same. A gentleman even if he was a bit squiffy."

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"Where's Jones got to?" asked Tim vaguely, as the car rolled homewards out of the Market Square.

"Never you mind," replied Short with a grin, and a roll of his humorous black eye. "He's probably cushy enough by now."

They sang uproariously and independently as they drove

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home with weeping eyes in the open car, through the bitter cold of the small hours. All except Stevens, who had got to the quarrelsome stage, and carried on an interminable argument with nobody. "If you say the old Terriers were no blurry good you're a blurry liar—"

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## CHAPTER XIV

## *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

AT about three o'clock on a sopping February afternoon a handsome black-haired young infantry subaltern came out of the station at Filsley in Staffordshire and contemplated industrial England with a most unfavorable eye. Filsley was Blackton again on a meaner scale. Blackton, coal and cotton, was of considerable size, and the residential side of it, on which lay Moorhen Camp, had a certain well-ordered suburban smartness; the other end of the town Tim had never explored. Filsley, coal and iron manufactures, was much smaller, and the station was *in medias res.* The square outside it looked unutterably squalid in the drizzle, and the sky above the sooty buildings was smirched with smoke. The people had the peculiar draggle-tailed pretentiousness of the industrial crowd on a wet Saturday afternoon. A tram roared past with obscured windows, a solid mass of damply packed humanity. "Cab, sir?" asked the aged war-time porter with the young man's solitary suitcase.

"Please."

A four-wheeler ambled forward, and the traveler plunged into its musty depths. "Where to, sir?" enquired the porter.

"Oh—" the fare fumbled in his tunic pocket, produced and consulted a letter "—'The Oaks,' Hillcrest Road, Mr. Staveley's house."

"Very good, sir. Mr. Tom Staveley's, Jim."

"Oo's 'e?" asked a loafer, as the cab drove away.

"Not nobody from round 'ere," replied the porter. "Goin' up to owd Tom's, 'e is. Swanky chap an' all."

"Lots of 'em with swank these times," observed the loafer.



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"Ar. But not with real leather suitcases there isn't," returned the porter, whose aged eye had learnt to note the things that really tell.

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Seated in the dawdling cab, with the old horses clip-clopping over granite sets, Tim Staveley looked disgustfully upon the cradle of his race. This, then—this place of fish-and-chip shops, small newsagents, glaring tawdry gin-palaces, mud, hoardings, raw and hideous factories, and ugly mean-looking people was, as it were, the civic epidermis that his father had sloughed. Butterflies! He could imagine the pleasure that his father must have taken in them, but how, born and brought up in such a place as this, had he known of their existence?

The cab worked its way out of the center of the town, left the tram lines, crossed a humped canal bridge over black rain-pocked water, threaded its way through a great rectangular comb of sordid workmen's houses, and began to follow a side road past more public houses, patches of waste land where rubbish was dumped, more hoardings, a football ground where a dejected-looking but determined crowd was huddled in the rain watching a game, a brick-field, and at first tentative and then assured suburban property of a better sort. At length it left the main artery and bumped into a narrower road still, bordered on one side by fair-sized detached houses behind depressing laurels, and on the other by a somewhat abashed field, which announced its readiness to become Eligible Building Sites in faded white letters on a black ground, an offer which mankind was obviously in no hurry to snap up. The houses, built in the fashion of the 'fifties, and the sudden termination of the road in a cascade of garden refuse and empty tin cans, indicated that here was a development scheme which had become petrified.

At the very last house in the row the cab stopped, and Tim descended opposite a pair of tall yellow-painted gate posts, which bore the legend "The Oaks" without any ostensible justification on the part of the landscape. The

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house boasted a semicircular carriage drive, but the gates were shut—indeed, no carriage had ever made use of the two gates since Tom Staveley's marriage in 1886; so Tim carried his suitcase up the right-hand segment—much interested in an arboreal curiosity which he had not before encountered, but which was in fact a weeping willow—mounted a flight of steps between two monstrous mud-filled urns, all painted a uniform livid yellow, and rang the bell. As he waited on the step he looked back down the drive at the prospect; first came the road, and then the meadowland sloping gently down to the London and North Western Railway, which traversed the foreground, and from which a siding entered the less esthetic elevation of the Moonbeam Motor Company's Filsley works. Beyond this major motif were visible more distant monuments of industry—the retorts of a steel plant, a great gray spoil-tip with a light railway running along the top of it, and here and there in the distance the high poised wheels and huddled cottage of coal. To the north a stretch of the canal veered into sight and out again, beyond which agricultural land and a great mass of stark trees emphasized the vileness of man.

"My God!" said Tim, thinking of the sunlit garden in the Calle Hospital.

The opening of the ground-glass door of the vestibule, with its inset quadrilaterals of red, blue, orange, and green, recalled him from his thoughts. He turned, expecting to confront a servant, but instead a middle-aged gentleman in a suit of gray tweed, bald, fattish, with deep lines running from the corners of his mouth to his nostrils owing to an habitual unsmiling dourness, came through the portal and shook him warmly by the hand, staring at him very hard the while. Utterly unfamiliar as this person was, occasional similarities of voice and carriage to his dead father struck Tim incredibly as he moved and spoke; it was like seeing something one knew well through a distorting mirror. This must be Uncle Tom. "Here he is, mother," remarked Uncle Tom grimly, exactly as he

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might have said: "The hearse is at the door, and we must make the best of it." He intended to be—nay, he genuinely felt—hospitable; but he was a man of naturally sepulchral manners. "Here he is, mother. Here he is, girls. Come in, Timothy, out o' the wet."

Tim obediently advanced into the semi-darkness of the hall, and was at once seized by a half-seen feminine presence. "This is your Auntie May," Tim heard his host say in an apologetic tone, as he found himself kissed heartily on the cheek. "And this is your cousin Kate." He confusedly grasped the hand of a younger female. "And this is Winnie." Winnie, standing in the light of the sitting-room door, was easier to distinguish than the others. She was a small girl of about twelve years, with flashing spectacles, whose front teeth were confined behind a species of gold railing. "Hang up your hat and coat, my boy. Mary, take Mr. Timothy's bag up to his room. That's right! Come in to the fire; I expect you'll not be sorry to see one on a day like this."

Tim divested himself of his outer coverings, and was shepherded into the room which the party had evidently just left. "Take this chair and have a warm," invited Uncle Tom, poking the already excellent fire. Tim complied, and his relatives grouped themselves round him and stared with frank curiosity.

"Well, I am glad you were able to come," said his aunt, smiling fixedly. Almost immediately Tim became fascinated by this smile, which never seemed to leave Auntie May's face, as if to make up for her husband's funereal cast of countenance. Lady Stokes, wife of the member for the Filsley division, whose duties brought her into contact with the ladies of the constituency, had once remarked to her husband in private: "That Mrs. Staveley —I'm sure she hangs her smile on the end of the bed at night."

"It was very good of you to ask me," replied Tim politely.

"O' course we asked you," observed Uncle Tom. "O'

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course we asked you. The pity of it is that your father couldn't have been with you. I'm sure if he'd—"

"There now, father," interrupted Auntie May. "Why drag all that up? I'm sure Timothy knows nothing about it."

"Who's dragging what up?" asked Uncle Tom with some asperity. He was conscious of his skill as an orator, and disliked interference. "There were differences, and why pretend there weren't? What I was going to say was, it's no part of our business to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. We can safely leave that to the Almighty." One of Uncle Tom's greatest assets, much admired by his religious associates, was his happy knack of apt biblical quotation. "Especially," he added impressively, "at such a time as this."

"I'm sure that my father would have liked very much to be here too," said Tim insincerely. "No doubt if we had come home together, as we had intended, he would have brought me to see you."

"And I'd ha' been glad to see him," observed Uncle Tom. "I'd ha' been glad to see him. He went away of his own free will, and there was always a place for him under his father's roof if he'd wanted it. Well, well! Differences between relatives are always very sad, but they will happen. Your father was always such a one for going his own way, and I must say my poor mother was at the back of it. Your grandmother, you know. He took after her. It was her that got father to send him to the University instead of letting him start in at the works when he was sixteen, like I did. It might have made all the difference to Charles if he'd done that."

Tim had no doubt of it. "I think he was happiest doing the work he did," he observed mildly.

"We can only hope so," replied Uncle Tom dubiously, glancing out of the window as if thinking: "Out of this Garden of Eden, who *could* be happy?"

"I'm sure Charlie has made a great name for himself," smiled Auntie May. "Only fancy! They're talking of

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putting up a tablet about him on the front of the Institute in the square. There's a statue of your grandfather there; I expect you saw it as you came through."

"I didn't notice it," admitted Tim. "Why did they erect a statue of him?"

The eyes of all the family opened a little widely at this. "Why," answered Auntie May, "he was mayor three times!"

Now that Tim's first emotions had had time to subside, his artist's eye began to take in the room. He had never before seen such a place. The primitive he knew and understood, and he had of course seen plenty of ugly furniture in South America, where bad taste is just as prevalent as elsewhere; but South America does not provide the devastating scope which the ample shopping facilities of England give to those with no eye for harmony. No room he had ever seen in Valparaiso had the stodgy ugliness of this.

It was papered in dark blue, with a pattern of large emphatic foliage. The walls were further decorated by two large gilt-framed portraits of Tom Staveley the First and his wife, in the unlovely attire of the 'sixties. Grandfather Staveley had never been a handsome man, and his features, with their frill of beard under the clean-shaven chin, would have scarcely been decorative even if depicted by the hand of a skillful painter; as it was, his portrait, and that of his wife, in a black silk dress with hair drawn back from a tortured forehead, done "on the cheap" by some local artist, made Tim shudder. Between these two works, which faced the fireplace, hung a very indifferent landscape in oils, which would have looked almost as well upside down.

Above the fireplace was a mirrored overmantel, a complicated affair of many shelves which towered to the ceiling, and housed a variety of rubbishy ornaments and miscellaneous trash. The mantelpiece itself supported a monstrous clock of black marble with pink side columns, and two funereal urns in the Burslem classical style. The

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ceiling was heavily molded in plaster, and from an enormous boss in the center depended the pulleys and weights of an old-fashioned gas fitting.

In the lace-curtained and much bedraped bow-window stood a pedestal, on which was a green and yellow majolica pot containing a leprous fern. At the other end of the room, facing the window, was the sideboard, a ponderous mahogany piece with a marble top and a mirrored back, on which were a tantalus, a biscuit barrel, a butter cooler (filled with pieces of string and odd bills) and a huge salad bowl (which was never used). The dining-table was also of mahogany, with dropsical cabriole legs, and a brown plush cover with pompons round the edge. Against the wall at intervals chairs were ranged—a set in walnut and green velvet, very solid and expensive, which had been bought by Uncle Tom in the 'nineties to replace the original horsehair. The sofa of this suite, which had all the luxurious appeal of a park bench, stood along the wall under the ancestral portraits, with Winnie in possession in an attitude of attention, with her mouth open. The male armchair (with arms) was occupied by Tim; the female (without arms) by Auntie May and her smile. There was also a grandfather chair in brown leather. Cousin Kate sat on one of the ordinary chairs at the table; she was a not unattractive girl of about Tim's own age, and he was confused to discover that when his eyes met hers she looked at him squarely for a moment, and then pointedly removed her gaze with a slight smile of feigned embarrassment. Uncle Tom stood on a puce hearthrug with his back to the mottled gray marble mantelpiece. The carpet was a new and cheerful Turkey.

"I was in London, and those solicitors gave me your address," remarked Uncle Tom. "That was how I got hold of you. We were quite surprised, weren't we, mother?"

"Why surprised, uncle?"

"Well, you see, we'd got accustomed to the idea of Charlie going to live in South America, and you being

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born there, we'd almost come to look on you as a—" the perilous word "native" was hovering on Uncle Tom's lips, but he restrained it with an effort "—fixture in those parts. You see, for all we knew, with Charlie dying when you were young, and you being in charge of those guardians of yours—and both of them foreigners—you might not even have been able to speak English. But now we see you, o' course, we can see we'd got on the wrong track. I'm sure it does you great credit, coming home to join the army. Not but what I'd suppose anybody would be glad to get away from such a place."

"It isn't quite so bad as all that," protested Tim, who was beginning to find his feelings becoming vaguely ruffled.

"Well, p'raps not. I know what you mean," agreed Uncle Tom, consciously broad-minded. "That sort o' thing has its attractions; I like a bit o' foreign travel myself." His journeyings had included a few trips to Paris —he held it the duty of a moral leader to see such things for himself—a conducted tour in Italy, and a business trip to Germany, so that he regarded himself as a much-traveled man. "But it isn't civilization, put it how you may. It's not like this, is it?" He waved a vague hand.

"No, it isn't like this," Tim admitted.

"And the people," continued Uncle Tom, in his loud, flat, lugubrious voice. "Cath'lics, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"Huh!" snorted Uncle Tom, with a bitter sneer. It was the first time that his toneless voice had betrayed feeling, and Tim was surprised and a little shocked by the unexpected venom of him. "No wonder those places are what they are. Riddled with popery and superstition. No freedom of thought."

Tim recalled *taitita dios*—little father God—and the candles of the poor, and the jovial priests with their bare feet. Some of those priests were not all they should have been, and it was all very simple, of course—those ignorant grown-up children with their ingenuous creed.

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But were they ignorant because of their beliefs, or did they believe because their understanding could go no further? Anyhow, he could not imagine them otherwise. "It's what they're used to," he remarked.

"Is there a Methodist church there?" asked Uncle Tom.

"I believe all the independent sects are combined in Valparaiso in what is called the Union Church."

"Then," pursued Uncle Tom, plainly horrified, "you didn't attend it yourself?"

Tim had never attended any church regularly, and he displayed the badge of his kind. "I'm Church of England," he replied.

Uncle Tom seemed to think this almost worse than atheism; he shook his head. "'Thou shalt not raise up for thyself any graven image,'" he remarked reproachfully.

"Good gracious, father," said Kate vivaciously, speaking for the first time, "don't get up a religious argument. Tell us about South America, Tim. I'm dying to hear all about the bull-fights, and people being serenaded, and all that."

"I'm afraid they don't allow bull-fights in Chile, so I never saw one. They have them in Peru, I think. And they don't do any serenading in Valparaiso. The police would stop it."

"Don't they? Well, I never!" said Auntie May. "I always thought that was what they did in South America. What is it like then?"

Kaleidoscopic visions flashed before Tim's mind—the infinite variety of the Pacific, the vast sweep of a larger emptier land, sunshine, vine-leaves, a blaze of flowers. He felt the inadequacy of his tongue. "I've got a couple of sketch-books in my bag," he remarked. "I'll show them to you. They'll give you a better idea than ever I can."

"Oh, do you sketch?" said Cousin Kate. "So do I."

"Yes," beamed Auntie May, "she got several certificates at school, didn't you, Katie?"

"That's more than I've done," said Tim with a smile.

"Never mind," remarked Uncle Tom, pointing the

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moral. "You try again, my boy. What is it the Bible says? 'He who endureth to the end—'"

Tim scarcely liked to spoil this by pointing out that he had not so far tried at all.

"Are there Indians in South America?" asked Winnie.

Tim was conscious of a faint irritation. How big did these people think South America was? They would not have thought of asking a Greek about the customs of Sweden, though Europe was not a third as large; and yet they spoke of South America as if it had been the Isle of Man. "There are Indians in the south of Chile, but I never saw any," he replied. "Valparaiso is quite a large city, you know."

"But I suppose there were parrots and monkeys and poisonous snakes?" pursued Winnie. "And jungles and jaguars and pumas?"

"No, I'm afraid not. There isn't anything poisonous in Chile, and no wild beasts that I ever heard of."

"Well, were there humming-birds?"

"Yes, there were humming-birds," replied Tim, glad to be able to oblige at last.

But the elders of the party were waxing impatient. They were not in the least interested really in South America, nor indeed in any place except Filsley. They were preparing to suppress Winnie when there came the sound of somebody slamming the front door, and busying himself at the hatstand. "That'll be Jack," remarked Uncle Tom. "He's been at the works this afternoon. We're rare and busy just now with munitions."

At the first sight of Cousin Jack Tim was struck by a thought, which continued to flicker in his mental heavens with the cold vividness of an aurora borealis. It was: "Why aren't you in the army?" Cousin Jack was a vigorous-looking young man of five-and-twenty, clad in the fine linen of the well-off provincial fashionable. He was not a whit abashed by his civilian status; indeed, his manner towards Tim verged on the patronizing. "How are yer?" he enquired. "Have a comfortable journey

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down? That's right." He sat heavily in the vacant armchair. "Lord, what a way to spend Saturday afternoon! But we mustn't grudge it, I suppose, in war-time."

Uncle Tom looked at his watch, and closed the case with a snap. "Ten past five," he remarked. "I expect Timothy'd like to see his room, and so on, before tea. This way, my boy." He led the way upstairs, and flung open a door at the end of a corridor. "Here you are," he remarked. "The bathroom's along the passage. This used to be your father's room."

"Really?" said Tim, with genuine interest. "This is the same house then?"

"Same old house. Your grandfather bought it in '61, when he began to go ahead." It seemed odd to Tim, this talk of his unknown grandfather; the word had always previously meant somebody very much present and important. "He was the first owner. It was his father that started the business—in one shed off Darlington Street. He'd been a blacksmith. You can see our works from the window, only it's dark now. These—" he turned to a well-filled bookshelf "—are some of your grandmother's books. She was always a great one for reading. I had these brought up here out of the way; they're not much in our line, and—well—some of them are very fine, everybody knows that—classics no doubt, and all right for people that go in for such stuff—but we see a good deal of company from the Chapel, ministers on circuit and so on, and I'd hardly like to have 'em about downstairs. But being that they were mother's, I've never quite liked to get rid of them. There's no doubt that most of these great poets are a loose lot—look at Byron. I remember father threatening to burn a book of his poetry that mother had, but he never did. He was that fond of her, and a bit afraid of her, too. Well, well! You've got everything you want? All right!"

Tim, left alone, surveyed the double shelf of books. Shelley, Browning, Keats, Tennyson, Byron, Spenser's "Faërie Queene"! He began to understand what had

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previously been inexplicable—the presence of such an apparent changeling as his father in a cradle of this sort. Here, then, was the carrier of the divine spark from some distant altar-lamp of genius, through hostile cross-breezes and dark places. Tim's heart softened towards this unknown grandmother, an inarticulate poet married to the son of a Methody blacksmith, brought up in circles where beauty was deemed a particularly subtle sin; a flower, growing on a rusty refuse dump of scrap iron. He thought, too, of her struggle to secure for her second son, the heir to her heritage of ecstasy and bitterness, what had been denied to herself—an avenue of escape.

"Poor grandmother!" said Tim, putting back a slim, worn volume.

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After a sumptuous high tea—a new alimentary experience for Tim—the family settled down round the fire to conversation and Tim's sketch-books. Uncle Tom viewed these with some suspicion. His views upon art were quite definite though not easily stated; he considered that skill acquired by industry was a laudable refinement, but that a natural gift was indicative of flightiness of character and lack of moral fiber. Katie scarcely looked at the sketches, though she was very assiduous in passing the books to Tim and taking them back again, letting her fingers touch his each time. Winnie surveyed the pictures in adenoidal silence. Jack enquired in an undertone whether there were any studies from the nude, and, finding that there were not, lost interest. Auntie May, at intervals, said that this or that sketch was very nice. Tim's three cousins had certain fixed ideas about South America —Katie imagined it as a penny-novelette Land of Romance, Jack enjoyed imagining its vices, and Winnie saw it as a sort of zoo without cages; but in what it was actually like neither they nor their parents had the faintest interest. To Tim, with his lively pleasure in seeing and hearing of new things, this seemed incomprehensible; to him nothing was so fascinating as that jewel of many

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facets, the world. But he was nearer in point of view to his relatives than he supposed; it was simply in the definition of the word "world" that they differed. To them Filsley was the world, and nothing real happened outside it. South America was simply foreign parts, and it was of no account what they were like, or what went on there.

At nine o'clock Uncle Tom looked at his watch again (he never consulted the clock on the mantelpiece, although it was going; not he! Safe and sure, that's Staffordshire) and said: "Prayers!" Tim wondered what was going to happen now. The ordered bustle showed that this was a regular domestic function. Mrs. Staveley rang the bell, and the three domestics, who had evidently been awaiting this summons, filed into the room.

Uncle Tom now opened a Bible, and, in a droning voice between a buzz and a bray, read—possibly as a delicate compliment to the visitor—the parable of the Prodigal Son. He then shut the book, and said: "Let us pray!" The company knelt down, and Tim followed suit, feeling oddly foolish and embarrassed. Reading the Bible was all very well, but he thought this rather excessive. He did not pray a great deal himself, and not being very familiar with prayer failed to regard it in the easy fashion which familiarity brings to practicing churchfolk. It seemed to him that if you had anything to communicate to your Maker it must needs be the outcome of some deep emotion, and ought to be expressed privately and not trotted out in this matter-of-fact way. He rested his elbows on the seat of a dining-room chair, and peeped at his companions round its back. Cousin Jack produced a quill toothpick from a waistcoat pocket, and began to probe a cavernous molar with a strident clicking sound.

However, Tim's delicacy was premature; when Uncle Tom said: "Let us pray!" he really meant: "Let *me* pray!" He took a great pride in his gift for *ex tempore* prayer. "Oh, Lord, that has seen us through the trials and tribulations of another day," he commenced, "grant that we may sleep this night pure in heart, and protect us from

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sinful thoughts and vain imaginings. Oh, Lord, keep thy servants here below in purity of spirit, and grant that they may continue to do their duty in that state of life into which it has pleased Thee to call them. We are but little children weak, Oh, Lord; lead Thou our footsteps aright. Jack, if you don't stop picking your teeth I can't go on."

Jack, lost in rumination, did not observe this admonition, which was delivered without the least change of tone.

"Oh, Lord God," continued Uncle Tom, "wash us with hyssop, that we may be whiter than driven snow. Forgive us our trespasses, and deliver us from evil, and from the snares and delusions of idolatry and popery. Let us not forget Hell fire, Oh, Lord. Grant that we may continue to be an example to those that have not seen the light, and may continue to serve Thee in our lives, and in our hearts, and in our souls. Jack, if you don't stop picking your teeth I'll have to stop."

"Click-*click!*" replied his unconscious son and heir. Tim gripped his chair-back very hard.

"Oh, Lord, watch over this house, and the manservant and the maidservant, and the ox and the ass, and the stranger within its gates. Grant that we may walk soberly and reverently before Thee all the days of our life, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen!"

"Aamen!" echoed the company.

"Click! Amen!" said Jack, coming in a little late.

The company rose to its feet again, and the servants left the room, followed by the master of the house, in a state of awful and solemn high dudgeon.

"I say, what's the matter with the guv'nor to-night?" asked Jack in surprise. "He's cut it uncommonly short."

It was twenty minutes before Uncle Tom returned, and even then he only did so to sit glaring in the deepest umbrage until bed-time.

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"Well, what do you think of him, mother?" asked Uncle Tom, in the privacy of his bed-chamber.

"I'm sure he seems a very nice boy," replied Auntie May. "Not a bit what I expected."

"Same here. I must say, considering he's been brought up amongst a lot of damn foreigners and Cath'lics, he's very creditable. Very creditable. I expected he'd be more foreign in his ways, but really, except that he's a bit dark-skinned, which isn't to be wondered at—" Uncle Tom believed that those born in all extra-European countries were, in a general way, black "—he might be an Englishman. He's a bit la-di-da and namby-pamby in his talk —not what I call downright."

"Oh, I quite like him. I wish he'd come home when Charlie died, and gone into the business."

"Good thing for him if he had," remarked Uncle Tom. "I tell you, there are good times coming. Never remember business so brisk."

"It's the war, I suppose."

"Eh?" Uncle Tom did not quite like it put as bluntly as this. "Well, maybe or maybe not. But it wouldn't be Christian in us not to be thankful for our good fortune, even if it is some one else's bad fortune."

Meanwhile Tim, preparing for repose, had opened his door in response to a knock, and admitted Cousin Jack. "Hello!" remarked this gentleman, holding up a half-empty bottle of whisky. "Like a spot before turning in? The guv'nor's inclined to be a bit stingy with the tiddley, so I keep a private bottle."

Tim, not feeling in need of the stimulant, nevertheless hesitated to rebuff this overture, and accepted a whisky-and-water in his tooth-glass.

"I expect you must think us damn slow," observed Cousin Jack. "The guv'nor goes in a great deal for Religion, you know. I don't bother about it myself, but I have to join in, just to keep the peace. I wish you'd been staying longer, and then I could have shown you about a

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bit." He winked. "I usually manage to run in to Birmingham on a Saturday night, to see a bit of life."

"Do you?"

"M'm. But I expect you don't mind a quiet week-end once in a way. I know how you chaps in camp go it. I wish I could join up. But I can't, you know—indispensable at the works."

"That's rotten luck," said Tim.

"Yes, isn't it?" replied Jack, without, however, giving the impression that it was preying on his mind. "But talking of Life, I expect you find England pretty dull anyhow after South America. I know a chap who's been out there, traveling in hardware, and he told me—"

Half an hour later Cousin Jack left Tim to sweet repose, the richer by two strong whiskies and several even stronger stories.

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Sunday morning broke clear and fine, and after breakfast Katie took the unwilling Tim—he had acquired a strong dislike to that sprightly damsel—to see the garden behind the house, an extensive pleasance with a tennis court, a vegetable patch, and a stable beyond, which had once contained old Tom Staveley's dog-cart and horses, but which now housed only Jack's motor-bicycle. Katie maneuvered Tim into an empty loose-box. "It's very dark in here," she remarked, stumbling against him so that her hair brushed his face.

"Yes, isn't it?" agreed Tim hastily. "Let's get out of it."

Katie followed him in silence (she became very haughty and distant for the remainder of his visit). As they walked constrainedly down the garden path Uncle Tom appeared at the French window of the drawing-room, clapping his hands. "Chapel!" he cried warningly, in his loud flat voice. "Chapel!"

Tim was not asked whether he wished to attend divine worship; his desire to do so was obviously as much a foregone conclusion to his relatives as his breakfast appe-

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tite. The family set off in a bunch. "We go down this way; there's a short cut across the field," remarked Uncle Tom, picking his way amongst the rubbish heaps and kicking aside empty tin cans. "One thing I like about this house is the situation. I do like a good view, don't you?"

The chapel at which Uncle Tom, we may suppose by inference, found freedom of thought, was a hideous building of corrugated iron, in a black back street. Its outward seeming made Tim very anxious to get inside, but once there he realized that impulse had betrayed him; it was worse inside than out. Tim was of that thoughtless modern school which seldom goes to church, and attaches more importance to what people do on week-days than on Sundays, failing to realize, as all truly religious people do realize, that by their opinions on church government, ritual, and equipment shall men be judged at the Last Trump. This conventicle's unique rightness and acceptability to God, therefore, of which the congregation were so obviously convinced that they alone amongst humanity possessed the secret, quite passed his limited and pagan understanding. Musing on his uncle's expressed sentiments regarding Catholics, he could not help thinking that of the two perfumes he preferred that of incense to that of cheap black dye; that if a service had to be unintelligible it sounded better enunciated in sonorous Latin periods by an expert than roared out at random in uncultured English by an amateur; and that image-worship was, on the whole, better than self-worship. For it had to be admitted that while the congregation contained many honest folks who, as their faces showed, felt a closer contact with their God for the stark bareness of everything, and the absence of intervening ceremony and trappings, the majority of its constituents plainly preferred a mean-looking place of worship because they were mean-looking themselves, and would have looked even more so in nobler surroundings.

Uncle Tom took a leading part in the ceremony, and was evidently much looked up to. A scorbutic youth—no

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doubt another of Filsley's indispensables—managed, while rolling his eyes and shouting about Hell and flames, to flip a *billet doux* on to Katie's hymn-book, which that damsel pocketed, Tim saw, with the coolness of long habit. And Tim thought that he detected the leaden eyes and shaky hands of several young men who, but for the demands of hospitality, might have been Cousin Jack's overnight companions in bright and breezy Birmingham.

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At six o'clock that night Tim, with a sigh of relief, sat back in the corner of a first class smoker on the train for Crewe, where he had to change for the north and Blackton. He was not of an age to be tolerant, to probe below the surface of things for possible virtues; to his young mind either a thing was or it wasn't, and in this case it decidedly wasn't. He looked back as the dreary lights of Filsley receded. "Never again!" said he, with a shudder.

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## CHAPTER XV

### *MAUDIE*

QUOTH Colonel Nicholls to his adjutant, one fine morning in the May of 1916: "Begad, it's a treat to see recruits pouring into camp like this." The Derby scheme was beginning to gush in a fine full spate, recalling the early days of the war.

"It is indeed, sir," replied Captain Everard.

"Gives our young pups something to do at last. This hanging about a camp is the very worst thing in the world for them. Not that it matters much; they'll all be wanted before long. There's a big push coming, Everard. Everybody in France is talking about it." The colonel had just returned from a Reserve Battalion Commanding Officers' instructional tour of the front, and had a slight tendency to mention it in conversation.

"About time, sir. There hasn't been a thing doing since the Salonica show last year—and goodness knows what's become of that."

"Well now, let's have a look at this new intensive scheme of training. You've got it in hand, eh? Let's see—squad drill, one month—musketry—bombing—bayonet fighting. Um-m! Three months, eh? It is intensive, not a doubt of that."

"And before the war we used to think it took a couple of years to lick a recruit into shape," said Everard.

"We were making soldiers then, not cannon-fodder," returned the colonel shrewdly. "What are these chaps going to face? They'll be herded into a trench in the dark and they'll stay there three or four days and then be herded out again; or if there's a stunt on they'll walk through a concentrated machine-gun *barrage* to the Bosche



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front line, which is all blown to bits, and there they'll sit down as before—what's left of them. It's devilish of course, but it really doesn't call for much training. They're fitted out with every damn thing they can want; there are subalterns to blow their noses, and to run after 'em with what they've left behind, such as their rifles and their boots. If their feet get cold, an officer comes and rubs 'em with whale-oil. No, the War Office is right; any fool could do it after three months' training."

The adjutant nodded dubiously. "Suppose so, sir. But what was it old Kipling said about having no doubt of the machine, but what about the man?"

"The question of physique, you mean? I don't think it matters. These chaps are used to beastly conditions in factories and coal mines, and nobody worries about their physique there, do they? For this sort of canning-factory war it's a case of scrap the wastage, like any mechanical undertaking. The other side are just the same. Now we shall want some more subalterns on this instructional work—we've a thousand men on the square already. Whom do you suggest?"

"I thought Gosling, sir, and Tewkes, and Staveley, and Higgs for the square—at present. Perhaps a few more later."

"Staveley? Oh, yes. How's young Staveley doing? He's a South American, you know. I knew his grandfather when I was on the Argentine boundary business—an old Bosche General—rather a fine old chap."

"A Hun, sir? Really?"

"Yes. Staveley's got two cousins Gott strafing. Queer, isn't it?"

"Staveley's a very decent sort of youngster, sir. Keen as mustard. He's eaten up all the courses he's been on; I only wish we'd been able to give that sort more to do. He does top-hole sketches. Have you seen any, sir?"

"I have." The colonel's eye twinkled. "I saw one that he did of me—that he hadn't intended me to see, I hope. Well, I'm glad he hasn't got into any bad ways

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during this doldrum period. I like the boy, and he's been on my mind—amongst a few dozen other things."

But the colonel's satisfaction was premature.

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A person who is accustomed to regular work and stimulating leisure, and has an inordinate capacity for both, is necessarily unsettled when deprived of them. Add to this the uncertainties of what is called an artistic temperament, the sudden removal of all steadying influences, an abnormally exhilarated and unfamiliar environment, and a quite exceptional innocence, and you will see how ripe Tim was for mischief—not the ordinary scrape of the average tough young scapegrace of a subaltern, but something much more devastating and sticky.

It is true that Tim's life had not been free from tragedy and he had a shrewd enough comprehension of the tricks of chance, and of life and death. Earthquake and pestilence had at least done that for him. His vulnerable side was his utter ignorance of the material considerations which bias every thought and act of most of us. He had never heard his parents, as we did in childhood, criticizing behind his back the rich relation whose every word and deed was lauded to his face. He had never heard any discussion of ways and means; all his relatives were of the lucky class which has enough and to spare for their wants. He had no conception of that self-interest which converts three-quarters of humanity into perpetual play-actors; he supposed the world to be full of detached observers like himself, deciding their conduct by clear-cut standards of right and wrong. The idea of a man thinking that a certain course was wrong, and yet adopting it because it suited him, common circumstance though this is, had never occurred to Tim.

He had reported at Moorhen Camp, asking nothing better than to bury himself in army work. The army, however, rebuffed him, and insisted on presenting him with much unwanted leisure, in which the evasion of boredom was a problem. You could knock about the town

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with other subalterns, but it was no metropolis, and more than an occasional binge was productive of headaches; you could talk in the ante-room, and that was all right as far as it went; and you could buy books—being well-off—until your cubicle was stacked with them. But the fact remained that on most days there was nothing whatever to do after four o'clock, if not after lunch, and how on earth were you to occupy yourself if you were of an active habit of mind, eighteen years old, full of "beans," not everybody's company, and ten thousand miles from home?

The devil found employment for Tim's idle hands as follows.

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The Astoria Toilet Saloon was rather an elaborate place. You entered an ornate marble-paved *foyer,* in which were armchairs and a fire under an elaborate overmantel, and here, if it was necessary, you waited. Inside was a super-barber's shop, where you could have your face ironed, or stewed under hot towels, or punched with a sort of india-rubber rock drill, and your hair either burnt off or mysteriously improved by having a blue electric light waved over it. There was much glitter—nickel and marble and bright-colored bottles of unguents, huge wash-bowls of porcelain set in somber black basalt, immaculate linen. Before the war the Astoria had catered for the knuts of Blackton—those remarkable pre-war exquisites who wore their hair in one straight immovable sweep from the forehead to the nape of the neck, whose trousers reached only halfway down the calves of the legs, and whose perforated brogues culminated in protective aprons of tortured leather—those same young men whose shortcomings had been the subject of much discussion in the press before Germany had assisted their elders to discover their virtues. The Astoria still catered for the fashionable young man, but he was now distinguished by a small cloth star on each cuff.

One evening, some three weeks after his memorable

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introduction to the night life of Blackton, Tim was sauntering out of this resort, much refreshed by its services—having his hair cut by a barber who had not been eating garlic was still a pleasing novelty to him—when he heard an ejaculation of surprise, and a voice said: "Hel-*lo!*"

He turned round, and it was Maudie.

He had a moment's indecision before he placed her, for his memories of their last meeting were somewhat hazy, and she was now hatless and wearing a white linen overall, with the badge of the Astoria in blue upon the collar. He saw, however, that his artistic perceptions, though blurred by the evening's revelry, had not betrayed him with regard to her good looks. She had a mass of fluffy golden hair above an attractive *piquante* face, and her eyes were very blue. "Have a manicure?" she said, smiling.

"Well, I've never had one before, but I will," Tim replied, and sat down at the other side of the little table in the white-paneled alcove.

Maudie began to set out the tools of her trade on the little glass slab. "Did you get back to camp all right the other night?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, we did. I'm afraid we were a bit noisy, though."

"I'm afraid you were," agreed Maudie demurely. They laughed in agreeable understanding.

The girl looked covertly at the open young face opposite to her, considering what line to adopt. Maudie Hillyer was not quite of the very usual type that she seemed at first sight to represent. She was twenty years old, the daughter of a respectable builder's foreman (who had recently turned her out of the house, neck and crop). She had good natural intelligence, and had been well educated at a national school—indeed, except that she had the morals of a monkey, she did great credit to Britain's system of educating the masses. In person she might have been the daughter of a hundred earls, and, owing to the facilities for study afforded by the weekly illustrated press, and a

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natural *flair* for dress, she contrived to wear her clothes like one. She was out for a good time, which to her meant theaters, restaurants, and occasional week-ends in London or at country hotels, and she got it; there was nothing to pay, for those whom she allowed to provide her with these things were personable young officers and part of the fun. But Maudie differed from most of her kind, which abounded during the war, in that she was, as well as avid for the pleasures of the moment, exceedingly clever, cold-blooded, and far-seeing. She had come to the Astoria when she was seventeen with the firm intention of capturing some rich stock-broker or other from among its clients, and she had not abandoned the scheme; she had merely shelved it for the duration of the war. There was too much easy pleasure in war time, for a girl of her good looks and discretion, for her to tie herself to a civilian husband, who must almost inevitably be middle-aged.

She now weighed up Tim, reviewed the circumstances of their meeting and calculated just how much of it, in his tipsy state, he was likely to have remembered, chose her attitude, and spoke, all in twenty seconds; Tim meant nothing to her, but you never could tell. "Rather nosier than I cared for, at times," she said, and watched for the effect.

It came as she expected. Evidently he did not recall any of her more revealing remarks. Tim flushed a little and replied: "Yes, I'm afraid you must have thought us rather rotters. But you know what it is when one's down from camp."

She took his brown paw in her slim white fingers and began to work upon it. "Oh, yes, I know. All the same, I did rather wish I hadn't gone at times. But the girls I was with wanted to—and"—she dimpled delightfully—"I thought it would be fun, so I went too, just to see what it would be like. I don't think I'll do it again, though. It was amusing, but once is enough."

There is no doubt that she ought to have been a judge

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of this if anybody was, having participated in innumerable such jaunts.

"By Jove, yes," said the sage and experienced Tim. "I shouldn't if I were you. You've no idea what some of these chaps in the camp are like."

Confirmed in the wisdom of her methods, and well pleased at her own sound judgment, she decided on audacity. "I suppose it was silly," she replied, all open-eyed innocence. "But how was I to know? I knew lots of officers when Daddy was alive—from his regiment. But they seem so different now."

"Your father is dead?" said Tim, touched by her fragility and defenselessness.

"Yes." Her blue eyes became pathetically misty, and no one could have dreamed that she knew very well from the time of day that her male parent, according to the custom of a lifetime, would be at that moment disposing of a pint of draught Guinness in the saloon bar of the "Royal Oak." "He was killed at Mons. There were only the two of us."

"You poor thing!" said Tim sympathetically. The girl, watching him warily, saw that he had swallowed this outrageous invention without a gulp, and felt a thrill of triumph. There was nothing she liked better than playing a part. "And is that why you're working in this place?"

"That's it. I had to do something—Daddy had only his colonel's pay—and it was this or a—a shop." The exquisite *moue* of repugnance she made over this word was a work of art; it was quite sincere, though, for she had worked in a vegetable shop until she was sixteen, and had hated it. "It's easy, and it's fairly well paid. There are tips, you know."

"But I say! How beastly for you!"

"I put up with it. It's no good being proud, is it?" she said, with a brave little smile. Then she fell silent, waiting for the return confidence which, as she knew from experience, would now be forthcoming.

"Well, I think you're jolly plucky," remarked Tim.

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"It's odd that you should be an orphan, because I'm one too."

"Really?" she said, without having to feign interest.

"Yes. But my father and mother died ages ago, when I was quite a kid, and I've lived with my grandparents ever since—in South America."

"In South America? How interesting that must be." It was to Maudie; it explained a good deal. For one thing, it explained the easy success of the colonel story. Maudie had known times when she had blundered, and tried that yarn on the wrong people, to find it greeted with cynical amusement. "I should love to travel—outside Europe, I mean. When Daddy was in India I was at school. Had your grandfather a cattle ranch or sumpthing?"

"Oh, no," answered Tim, smiling at her innocence. "Nothing like that. He was a general in the Chilian army. My father was the botanist. I expect you may have heard of him."

"Oh, yes? But what was your name? I didn't catch it the other evening."

"Staveley."

"And was your father *the* Staveley? How thrilling!" said Maudie, who now heard of that celebrity for the first time. "What have you been doing to your thumb knuckle? It's all cut."

"Oh, that's bayonet fighting. It always gets me there."

"Poor boy! I'll put a bit of sticking plaster on it." She brought out a square of pink court-plaster, and dealt with the abrasion in a sisterly fashion. "There you are. Now your nails are beautiful."

Tim examined his unnatural-looking digits solemnly. "I suppose they are," he remarked. "Thanks very much, anyway."

"You are complimentary, aren't you? Well, good-by."

"I say," said Tim diffidently, voicing an idea that had been growing on him for the last few minutes, "as we're both lonely orphans, couldn't you—do you think we could dine together some evening, and go to a show?"

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Maudie's method of replying was a *chef d'œuvre*. She considered a little, as if her sense of fun and her personal impression of Tim were struggling with a natural delicacy. To look at her it would scarcely have been possible to believe that she had dined with subalterns in public places some four nights a week for the past eighteen months. She looked more like a colonel's daughter at that moment than most colonel's daughters ever contrive to look. "All right!" she said, with just the right air of defying convention. "I'll come. Shall we say Thursday?"

"Thursday. Where would you like to go?"

"Oh, you probably know the places; I've scarcely been to any of them. I don't know Blackton very well," replied the fluffy *ingénue*, who had lived in the town all her life, and was known by name to the attendants at every place of entertainment in it.

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It is needless to say that once Tim had taken this little innocent under his wing she remained there. In return for various ingenious fictions of her own she soon contrived to extract from him all his history and realized that she had stumbled across a plum. She quickly abandoned her original idea of educating this artless youth and exacting toll for the process, and commenced to plan on a larger scale—nothing less than capture. She began to consider whether chance had not brought her a very superior substitute for that projected stock-broker.

It was early apparent that Tim had money; his way of paying for things, not wastefully but without counting, proved that. He did not squander, but neither did he consider. Maudie, an excellent little business woman, paid for some enquiries to be made at Somerset House when she got to know his history, and did not regret the expense. The will of Mr. Staveley, and of Tim's paternal grandmother—who had inherited the money of the Jenks of Cradley Heath, you remember—contained all she desired to know. Tim was perhaps not quite so rich as she could have wished, but he could well afford to keep a wife in a

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tiny flat in London, say, while he fought his country's battles. A little flat in London, with access to *thés dansants,* theaters, and night clubs was Maudie's dream—an ambition which a Blackton stockbroker, even if he had twice as much as Tim, was not likely to gratify. And then how excellent Tim was in other respects! Young, good-looking, manageable, and as green as grass. And if he did not come back from the war it would be a pity, but not a disadvantage in a way. There would probably be a pension.

Having made up her mind, Maudie set about her purpose with decision and energy. She did not have an easy time of it. There was the constant risk of an acquaintance giving her away, and she was within an ace of being exposed a dozen times. But she adroitly glossed over these unfortunate *rencontres* in a way that made Tim sorrier than ever for her defenseless and lonely state. She continued to act the colonel's daughter, therefore, indefatigably and with entire success, though after a while it began to bore her; various little mannerisms and tricks of speech, which would slip out despite all her cleverness, and must almost inevitably have betrayed her to an Englishman, were lost on South American Tim. She was soon rewarded by unmistakable symptoms in his behavior. As the spring of the year gave place to summer, Tim began to work ten hours a day over his job as one of the drill officers on the square, and he had no longer the spare afternoons which, spent hanging round the little table at the Astoria, had gone to his ensnaring. But by then he was hooked. He did not lose interest in his job—Tim was the sort of person who would not have turned round from an engrossing task for Venus herself—but after parade he would be into his other uniform and off at once to the most interesting and charming companionship he had ever known, whenever circumstances permitted. She had, of course, the skill to prevent their meetings becoming a commonplace; that would not have done, and besides, to be quite frank, she found his company a little

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slow, and had no intention of spending her time in it every night of the week.

So far, so good—or bad. But now came a hitch. The very innocence which had made Tim such an easy mark was now his armor. Maudie knew that he regarded her just as she wished him to; she knew, too, much better than he himself realized, the extent of her physical attraction for him. Of her power to arouse his sleeping instincts she had no doubt, but that was just what she dared not do. Once let the affair get to terms of affection and Tim would want to become engaged—he was just that sort, and she was pretending to be—and would broadcast his lady's praises to all his friends and relations. And then farewell to the colonel's daughter story, which would never stand cold water, and therefore to the idea of marriage, for the boy was still a minor. Maudie was playing for something more than an engagement ring, however handsome, and she saw at once, with Macbeth, that if it were done when 'tis done, then it were well it were done quickly. Unless he could, in some way or other, be rushed into matrimony before his friends were able to stop it, her plan would fall through. And even then there was sure to be trouble. If it could be managed on the eve of his going overseas, now . . .

However, he was not yet nineteen, and the thought of marriage had obviously never occurred to his boy's mind, so that the crisis could be postponed for the present. Meanwhile, she made a judicious survey of the marriage laws, and devoted special attention to the facilities given to the military for getting married in a hurry. And Tim was quite touched by her charming anxiety regarding the probable date of his going to the front.

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With the arrival of the new levies and the rumor of great doings in France, the enthusiasm which had been allowed to leak away and form highly explosive mixtures with baser things burned up once more with a bright clear flame in Moorhen Camp. It was remarkable how much

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latent good there turned out to be in even the mess nuisances when the magic wand of occupation was waved over them. The atmosphere of the camp cleared; cynical boredom gave place to healthy grousing, as everybody set to work on the task of turning clerks, cloggies, and dock-side laborers into soldiers in three months.

Came the first of July, and the surface of things began to alter like a melting river at the spring break-up. During June the subalterns had begun to disappear in twos and threes. A familiar face would be in the ante-room on Saturday, and on Monday somebody would ask: "Where's So-and-so this morning?" And the reply would be: "Went out on Sunday night." Then came the onset of the Somme, and the reason for this mysterious flitting became apparent. The drafts redoubled in size, and news came back to the camp that this and that and the other second Lieutenant, who had been larking in the ante-room a month before, grumbling at the delay in getting "out there," had got "out there" at last and fulfilled his little destiny. Boys marched past the sentries at the head of drafts on Monday, and were shoveled hastily into shell-holes by Saturday. The Somme was teaching the world something fresh about war. A new and different kind of subaltern began to make his appearance at Moorhen Camp —the first-fruits of the recently established cadet schools. One of these—a venerable object quite thirty-five years old—took Short's place in Tim's cubicle, and was flatteringly deferential to the latter's senior status. The little Lothario had not gone overseas; he had broken an arm at physical training and was at a hospital while it mended.

Tim was not nineteen until August, and a regulation had recently come into force prohibiting overseas service for those junior to that age. To his infinite indignation, therefore, he was deprived for a few weeks of the privilege of wandering blindly into the midst of that bewildering holocaust, and of being passed out of existence before he had grasped what was going on, like many another innocent. Furthermore, even when he was nineteen the colonel

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and adjutant, who showed a most dunderheaded disregard of the absolute necessity for his arrival at the front as soon as possible, refused at first to put his name on the list for active service. "Another thirster for blood!" said Everard wearily, as Tim expostulated. "Do you see this? It's the contract for the camp washing until September 1917. May I ask what's your damned hurry? I expect you'll be able to crowd in before the end."

The washing contract had a sobering effect upon Tim. He was still optimistically expecting a German collapse, and a general clearing up before the end of the year. And here was Everard, prosaically preparing for it to last for another fifteen months! Eternity, in fact. It couldn't possibly last as long as that; but still, perhaps there wasn't quite so much hurry as he had thought. He began to feel rather foolish. "It isn't that, sir," he said. "But all the others are going, and one doesn't like to be out of it."

"Quite," remarked the adjutant drily. "So you want to drop this batch of recruits with three weeks of their course still to go, and rush off and win the war? Nothing doing, my boy. I'll put your name on the list when this lot are done with, and you can take your turn. Have you had any leave yet—besides week-end leave?"

"No, sir," replied Tim. He had not thought of applying for long leave since he had become engrossed by his recruits, and before that he had been too junior.

"Well, put in, and perhaps you'll get a week when you've done with the square," said Everard benevolently.

A fortnight later Tim was facing Maudie across a rose-lit table at the Imperial Hotel, where they were dining before going on to the theater. "I shall be off the square in another three days," he remarked, "and then I'm going on the list for the front. And I've got a week's leave, beginning Monday."

"Have you really?" said Maudie. "That's funny. My holidays start on Monday too." The manager of the Astoria Toilet Saloon would no doubt have thought it

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was funny also, for he hadn't heard of it. "What are you going to do with yourself?"

"I don't quite know," confessed Tim. "My only relatives are some people down in the Black Country, and I'm certainly not going to them. When I was first home I had a jolly good time in town, but then my tutor was with me—an awfully good sort. What about you?"

"I haven't got anywhere special to go either," replied Maudie, adorably forlorn. "I expect I shall go to some seaside place. I can't afford anything very wonderful. A holiday by one's self is not much fun, so I don't much care where I go."

They were silent for a space.

"Look here," said Tim, hesitating. "Couldn't I come to the same place that you go to? Then we might go about together and see things."

Maudie brightened. "That would be nice," she remarked. "It would be jolly to have you there. I shall be staying at a boarding-house, and I did hate the people so last time I went. It was all so different to—" Her eyes became vague, and Tim knew that she was thinking of the dear dead days beyond recall. She did it very well.

"One of those places on the front, where people sit on the steps and eat shrimps?" said Tim, who had been to Brightpool once in a fellow-subaltern's care.

"That's it. And all at one long table for meals. But not on the front; I can't run to anything so magnificent. I shall be up a side-street."

Tim cast back his mind to the casually seen Brightpool boarding-houses. He had not taken much notice of them, but the people in the windows had been what he described, with the frank unquestioning snobbishness of youth, as *medio pelo*—an expressive and untranslatable South American expression. He imagined himself calling at such a place in search of Maudie—climbing that flight of concrete steps amidst the curious glances of fat women and men smoking rank cigars. "I say," he remarked, "that won't be much fun. Look here, let me stand treat. Put

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up at a decent hotel—the sort of hotel you'd have gone to with your father."

"You mean, let you pay? Oh, but I couldn't possibly—"

"Oh, rot! We're friends, aren't we? Who's to know or care? If it hadn't been for the war—"

"It isn't so much that I mind your paying, as it's you, and it's jolly decent of you," said Maudie, "but, you see, girls can't go and stay alone at big hotels. It isn't done. So it's impossible anyway." She looked down, and rolled a thoughtful bread pill. "Unless, of course—" An expression of mischief crossed her face.

"Unless what?" asked Tim.

She dimpled. "We ought not to do it," she observed.

"But what?"

She leaned forward with eyes roguishly sparkling. "Supposing Second Lieutenant Staveley and his sister went—and father and mother were to follow at the end of the week? And at the last moment they couldn't come, and so the children had to go hastily away again?"

"By George, that is an idea!" cried Tim. "You have a great brain, Maud."

Maudie blushed prettily, just as if she hadn't known that very well.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE VICTIM OF LOGIC*

IT was as if the passengers of a transatlantic liner had all presented themselves at once to go on board, in rather greater numbers than the ship was built to accommodate, with their luggage in their hands and no idea of the numbers of their berths, thought Tim, as he waited on the quay at Devonport to go on board H.M. Transport *Sychophantic,* previously a crack vessel in the St. Lawrence run. In only one particular were the embarkation arrangements superior to those of peace-time—there was no "seeing off"; and anybody who has participated in this awkward business will at once understand that war brings some compensations, at any rate. They had come down by special train the night before, from camps all over England; their good-bys were said, and none of their kith and kin knew where they were.

The attention of everybody at Moorhen Camp had been so fixed upon the doings in France, and the possibility of a new weapon, the tank,—which nobody knew much about, for the papers were prohibited from publishing photographs of it as stringently as if it could have been copied in a day from such a disclosure—finishing the war in double-quick time, that Tim and his comrades-in-arms had rather overlooked the various supernumerary wars that were in progress in other parts of the world. It came as rather a shock, therefore, when, barely a week after the return of Tim and his "sister" from their discreet holiday in the Lake District, this notice was posted on the board outside the mess:



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*The following officers will proceed on 48 hours' leave, and will hold themselves in readiness to go to Egypt:—*

*2nd Lieut. T. Staveley.*
*2nd Lieut. V. K. Short.*

Tim hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry at this unexpected development, but his companions obviously had no doubt as to whom they considered lucky. So he hastily procured some drill uniform, and paid a guinea for a sun-helmet (which, as he afterwards found, he could have obtained for six shillings from Ordnance), spent his precious forty-eight hours in private concerns, and here he was.

The train, after shunting its way across bridges and over iridescent dock-basins, flavorous of many engine-rooms, with an air of not knowing very well where it was going, had decanted them at length on a little quay in the heart of the docks, where several previous parties were already drawn up awaiting their turn to go into the ship. Here they remained for some time, in a state of impatience and anxiety not to be imagined by those comfortable civilian passengers who pick out their cabins beforehand on a large scale-plan, and are in no danger of being left bunkless, and of having to sleep on a teak deck. At last the draft was tallied on board, and Tim and Short were at liberty to look after their own housing, which went strictly on the basis of first come, first served; in the saloon they joined a queue, filing past a harassed officer at a table, who ticked off their names on a list and allotted them berths. Sitting beside this officer, and annoying him exceedingly by their senile cackling, were two very old gentlemen on their way to Egypt, engaged in an argument about seniority, with a view to the sinecure of Officer Commanding Ship and its attendant emoluments. "I tell you it doesn't matter which of us has been an acting Brigadier-general," said the first testily. "That's not our permanent rank. I was a colonel before you were—"

"Well, I don't see that that counts. I was a major five years before you, according to what you say."

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"All right, let's go back to the beginning, colonel. I was at the Shop in '63."

"He! He! He! I was at Sandhurst in '61!"

At last a temporary brigadier-general came on board, who had been a lieutenant in 1914, bringing this historical research to an abrupt close.

Having got their berth numbers, Tim and Short battled their way down into the bowels of the big ship, where *poltergeister* smote heavily from behind, batmen staggered under plethoric valises, and pushing hordes of officers with bulging haversacks wandered like lost souls up and down the alley-ways, looking for E deck, and the Medical Officer, and the bar, and Cabin Number So-and-so. The cabin was large and luxurious—for the ship was still in peace-time trim, complete with white-coated stewards—and a great contrast to the little den in which Macleod and Tim had traveled from South America. The two companions seized upon the bunks, leaving the third inhabitant, a bespectacled and soulful youth with a large Adam's apple and the flash of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who arrived a moment later, to take the settee.

No sooner was the last draft on board than the hawsers were cast off, and the steamer moved away with every appearance of haste, while the troops exchanged cheers with the dockyard laborers, as if the line had just been broken somewhere and reënforcements were urgently needed on the lines of a cinematograph drama. Once out in the middle of the harbor, however, she dropped anchor again and fell into a sort of trance, which lasted until about nine that night. Tim fell asleep to the thump of the engines as they headed down Channel.

When he awoke next morning Short was shaving his arms before the mirror—a little habit which had originated, so he said, in a chance experiment in boyhood. Everything seemed extraordinarily quiet. "The sea's very flat," Tim remarked.

Short agreed.

"What's happened to the engines?"

"Stopped. Anchor's down, too."

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"Really? Where are we?"

"Back in Devonport, old feller," answered Short, and began to whistle.

It was the truth; there had been a scare of submarines, and they had so far only progressed at the rate of about a foot an hour on the road to Berlin. That night, however, they really did get away, and rounded Finisterre in the teeth of a westerly gale. The ship was carrying little cargo and rode high, and Tim was sick accordingly; nor was he allowed to hide his misery in his bunk, like a pampered civilian. As luck would have it he was Orderly Officer next morning, and had to penetrate into every queasy recess in the great hull, with his rebellious stomach perpetually encouraged in its evil courses by the sight of similar mutiny. The Orderly Sergeant gave way to nausea even as he saluted; every Tommy Tim looked at vomited immediately, as if the very sight of him had been too much for them. But he controlled himself with an iron hand, until, entering the presence of the O.C. Ship to make his report, his feelings overcame him and he joined that distinguished officer in an awful cataclysm.

This kill-or-cure treatment stood him in good stead, however, and he was up and about the decks, in spite of the weather, before the majority of the stricken. The great ship groaned like a tormented thing in the grip of the seas; men made their way from one precarious handhold to another, executing complicated involuntary maneuvers. "Jigger it!" gasped the pallid Short to Tim in the alley-way, as they laboriously climbed up, up, up, and then ran helplessly down again. "This is worse than coming home after a jag!"

They dropped their escort off Ushant—this was long before the days of organized convoys—and drove ahead without a stop until they anchored one evening under the mighty bulk of Gibraltar, strangely bright and luminous after darkened England. Here they left the bad weather behind; followed four days of blissful sun-bathed indolence, when, except for the burdens of submarine guard and the ubiquitous physical-training expert, there was

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usually nothing to do except think of the next meal, and wonder why one hadn't joined the Navy. The Mediterranean was at that time the happy-hunting-ground of Arnauld de la Perrière, the wily Franco-German U Boat commander, who sank a boat two hours ahead of them and another a scant half-day behind; but they naturally knew nothing of this, and what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over.

After they left Gibraltar they hugged the African coast, near enough for a good view of the littoral, but as they left Tunis behind the coast-line fell away, and they passed Malta, a rocky hummock to port. Next came an interval of empty sea, and then they were steaming north among the myriad isles of Greece. "Odd to think that those are really the isles of Greece, 'where burning Sappho loved and sang,' " remarked the poetic Welsh Fusilier, contemplating them through the port-hole as he fastened his necktie.

"It looks a damn good spot for U Boats," rejoined the matter-of-fact Short. "You may be doin' a little burnin' and singin' yourself yet, sittin' on one of those rocks with your shirt tails flappin'."

However, no U Boat troubled them, and they pressed northwards into the Aegean Sea until one evening they came to a torpedoed ship half-submerged upon a promontory, like a signpost by the wayside, and the barren shores of a land-locked harbor fell around. The engines slowed to a halt; the anchor chain ran out, and they were at rest in the midst of a great concourse of shipping. Behind the serried masts of the water-front rose a fairy city, tier upon tier of pink and blue and yellow houses, walled and spired, each battlement and minaret distinct in the clear gold of the evening.

It was Salonica.

. . . . . .

"I wish we could have got ashore in this place," remarked Short, looking out of the port-hole at the town spread under the witchery of an autumn moon. "We'll be

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off in the morning, so the chief officer says, and I don't expect we'll get the chance. This looks the sort of spot where there'd be harems full of oriental beauties, and all sorts of sports and pastimes. I must say the fellers here have got a cushy job."

"There'll be oriental beauties in Cairo too, so make your mind easy, Shorty," said Tim, unlacing his boots. The Welsh Fusilier had not yet come down from the deck, and they were alone in the cabin.

"No doubt. Still, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—especially that sort of bird. It's a pity to miss an opportunity of addin' to one's experience and improvin' the mind," rattled Short, in his accustomed facetious way. "That's what I'm always tryin' to impress upon you young fellers. When in Turkey, do as the Turks do. It's not that I'm unpatriotic, mind you. I believe in what Shakespeare said. 'There's just as good on Blackpool beach as you find in gay Paree.' Look at Blackton; there was abundance for you. I wonder if we shall ever see good old Blackton again? I left a lot of tender memories behind there. Do you remember the red-haired girl at the 'Goat and Compasses,' Stave? And there was a farmer's daughter on the Sage road; she was a sporting piece too. And there was one of those manicure girls in the Astoria, a girl called Maudie she was—"

Tim sat up suddenly. "She was a bit of all right," continued Short, quite unconscious of the sensation he was creating on his audience. "I took her away for the week-end once—"

"You damned liar!"

Short, still staring out of the port, chuckled. "Yes, I did. She was expensive, but she was damn well worth it. A cut above Blackton form. You didn't— What's the matter?"

Short turned round to find Tim standing over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes. "You blasted lying little beast!" he cried. "Take that back! You know as well as I do you never did anything of the sort."

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"Eh?" said Short, looking at him in great astonishment. "Nothing to get your shirt out about anyway, is it?"

"I know that lady," raged Tim, in a very South American temper. "Take back what you said, damn you!"

Short took a dexterous flying leap from the sofa to the upper berth, armed himself with a boot, and sat cross-legged on the defensive. "Now don't get aireated, young feller," he remarked, grinning. "I'm not in the habit of tellin' yarns about myself, as you know very well. I'm sorry if she's a friend of yours; but you shouldn't have friends of that sort, that's all I can say."

"What do you mean?" stuttered Tim, pulling himself up by the rail of the berth, and aiming an unsuccessful blow at Short's gargoyle features. The latter evaded it without difficulty and rapped Tim over the knuckles of his other hand with the boot, so that he lost his grip and fell to the floor again. The smile had left Short's face. "Turned nasty, eh?" he said. "What the blazes is wrong? Not keen on her, are you? If you are, you've been had; I tell you, she's no good."

"Blast you, come out of that! You'll have to come down some time, and when you do I'm going to give you the best hiding you ever had."

"Oh, you are, are you?" replied Short truculently. "We'll see about that." Then his features softened at Tim's obvious distress. "I'm damn sorry if I've upset you, old chap, but I did take that girl for the week-end. I swear I did. And if you've got any ideas in your head about her, you'd better forget them. She's a bad egg."

Tim maintained a grim silence.

"I suppose she's told you the tale," continued Short. "If you won't believe me, you won't; but if you'd been out with her too I could have proved it. She's got a birth-mark—" He proceeded to give details which certainly should not have been available to mere acquaintances. "Why! What the devil!"

He jumped down from his place of security and seized Tim's arm in great concern. Tim had gone the color of

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clay; he sat down on the settee, and buried his face in his hands.

"There's somethin' about this I don't understand," observed Short.

Tim raised a stricken countenance. "I married her on Tuesday week," he said.

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It was Short's turn to be thunderstruck. "Kiss my lily-white Zulu dial!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean it? You must have been stone winnick! But, dash it all—Do your people know about it?"

"I haven't got any people in England. My father and mother are dead."

"But you must have somebody, uncles or guardians or something?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, how did you work it without lettin' 'em know? Under age, aren't you? They oughtn't to have given you a licence."

"I faked my age."

"But—!" Words failed Short; for once an affair of the heart was too much for the ugly little Don Juan. "What did you want to get married for, at your age? Why didn't you just get engaged, if you were feelin' spoony? Nobody in the camp heard about it; didn't any of them go to see you spliced?"

"No. You see, she wanted to keep it quiet."

Short snorted. "Well, I should've thought that the very fact that she wanted to keep it dark would've given you the tip that there was somethin' fishy."

"Oh, it looked reasonable enough. You see, we had to get married quickly. Or I thought we had."

"But why, for heaven's sake?"

"Well, you see, we'd been away together—"

"My dear feller, if all the subalterns in England were to marry the girls they've taken away for the week-end, bigamy wouldn't be the word— And besides, the very fact that she was willin'—"

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"We didn't go away like that," said Tim. "I never dreamed— We just went away to the same place. And then one day when we went up the lake to bathe and picnic, I—she—"

"I *see*," interrupted Short, amused in spite of his concern for his friend, for whom he had a great liking. "You were bold and bad, eh? And she played the innocent village maiden afterwards, I suppose? She seems to have had you properly."

"She cried dreadfully," replied Tim. "I—I can scarcely believe, even now— Anyhow, there seemed to be nothing else for it but marry her. Besides, I wanted to. Oh, God!"

"Cheer up," comforted Short. "You're not dead yet. The pity of it is that I've been out o' camp with that bad arm o' mine. Why, dammit, I might have mentioned that girl any time. It's a wonder you never heard anybody say anything. Though, now I come to think of it, I haven't seen her about with chaps from the battalion lately —except with you, now and again. But I didn't think anything o' that. Other times she was with Salchesters or Rutlands. I see! That was to lessen the chance of your hearin' any talk. She must have been regularly layin' for you. After your money, I suppose. You've got money of your own, haven't you, Stave?"

"Yes," replied Tim dully. Now that his eyes were opened, he could remember a dozen significant details; the behavior of a subaltern encountered at a theater, whom Tim had taken for drunk; the adroit and hitherto unsuspected pumping about his circumstances; the origin of the holiday project; the skillful maneuvering of that culminating boat picnic; the secret marriage, ostensibly because of Maudie's shrinking fear of talk; every step of the carefully planned intrigue which had pushed him into this. What a blind fool he had been! "I wouldn't have believed she could have done such things," he went on. "Her father was a colonel who was killed at Mons."

Short cogitated. "I rather think she told me that her

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parents lived in Blackton and had given her the push, because of her goin's on," he remarked. "Anyway, I don't mind bettin' he wasn't any colonel—not even in the Salvation Army."

"Was that a lie too? I swear I wouldn't have believed, if you hadn't known about that birth-mark. . . . We stayed together in town on my last leave, and she seemed frightfully cut up when I went. What the hell am I to do about it, Shorty?"

"It's a damn shame, and I'm damn sorry for you, but really I don't see what you can do at present. You've misstated your age, and you'll get into trouble with the army for that if it comes out. So you can't stop her money either, because she'll see where she's got you—"

"Oh, damn the money! The money's all right."

As a matter of fact, the money had very nearly been all wrong. Mr. Isherwood, on receiving lordly instructions from Tim to pay a considerable sum quarterly into his account at Cox's, had rubbed a doubtful jaw; but fortunately Mr. Haythornthwaite had said: "Um! Says he wants it because he's going to Egypt, doesn't he? He hasn't drawn much while he's been here. Might as well let him have it, though I wouldn't in the ordinary way; the grandfather's letter covers *us,* of course. Quite possibly he won't be alive to get control in two years' time. Egypt's expensive—my son finds that."

"—and then there are your friends. Do you want them to know? Have you written or anything?"

"Yes, I have; but fortunately I haven't handed in the letter yet. That's one good thing."

"Well, you can't make a row, or the whole thing will come out. You'll just have to keep quiet until you can get back home. I believe you could wangle out of it, being a minor—or anyhow you could get a divorce, I should think. If I could be of any use, I don't mind, you know. Or perhaps you'd prefer to keep her. She may behave herself now she's got there, though I very much doubt it. Once that sort's tasted blood—"

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"Damn it, I only wish I could. But how can I? She's done nothing but lie to me, and there must have been others besides you. Oh, Short, I am so damned miserable."

"Well, bite on it, old son," comforted Short.

At this moment the Welsh Fusilier made his appearance, quite unaware of the emotional turmoil into which he was arriving. "What a heavenly night!" he observed with feeling. "The view of the town is simply sublime! I feel quite worked up over it."

"Well, do it well overboard, that's all!" snapped Short. The Fusilier disrobed in snubbed silence, and put out the light.

. . . . . .

Tim lay for long after his companions were snoring healthily, watching the shifting glimmer of the tranquil harbor water on the white-painted ceiling, and brooding miserably on his wasted life—for a crisis looms large at nineteen. A philosopher would have pointed out to him that his position was not without interest as an example of cause leading to effect, and that this affair was due not so much to his own folly as to the inexorable logic of circumstances. The smallpox epidemic that had removed his mother, his father's weak heart, his grandfather's affection and Mr. Macleod's pedagogic zeal, which had kept him under their wings in dangerous ignorance, the impossibility of the Filsley relatives, the war, the idle days at Moorhen Camp, all had conspired to trap him into this. But unfortunately there was no philosopher present.

It was not so much that Tim cared about the thing for himself, though the blow to his *amour propre* was considerable; what his soul shrank from was the thought of his grandparents and his friends, who had expected such great things of him, coming to hear of his stepping into a foolish entanglement with an adventuress almost as soon as he left their care. What a childish idiot he had been! A wave of bitter incredulity suffused him. Now that he was away from the fascination of Maudie's proximity, it

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seemed impossible that a mere episode like this should have committed him so deeply; it was all, in the words of the Victorian young lady, so sudden. A year ago he had been coming home from South America, the world his oyster; it now occurred to him for the first time that oysters are dangerous as well as enjoyable. Here he was, like a fly on a paper, caught; and goodness knew what would be the end of it. . . .

His mind drifted off through vistas of unpleasantness, as he stared hot-eyed at the roof, and the peculiar noises of the bay and the distant squeal of oriental music from the shore drifted in through the open port. He knew that he wouldn't sleep a wink that night: and in the midst of thinking so, fell asleep, and slept heavily till morning.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### *THE PEARL OF THE AEGEAN*

AT nine o'clock next morning Tim went on deck, to seek what distraction he might from his load of sorrows in the scenery, before the ship resumed its way to the land of cats and Cleopatra. Exactly one hour later he was on the quay, slightly dazed, "numbering off" a party of laden warriors. Whether he had been landed at Salonica owing to some deep-laid scheme of the military machine or to mere light-heartedness was not clear, but there he was. The *Sycophantic,* Short, the Welsh Fusilier, all that had been familiar two hours ago, had vanished in the sudden fashion of the time.

Salonica at close range had lost all its charm. The streets around the quay were indescribably filthy, mean, and ill-paved. What was new was shoddy, and what was old was infinitely old and battered. Picturesque sea-rascals were unloading melons and charcoal and amphorae of the old classic shape from the island luggers along the sea wall, much as they had done when a certain man called Paul stopped to tell them of a new God nineteen hundred years before. Roman legionaries had stumbled over these very cobbles, no doubt making unfavorable comparisons like later soldiers. The city had a raffish look, owing to such an outrageous variety of population as was surely never seen in the world before; while Tim stood in the street and waited, first on one leg and then on the other, taking his first dose of the interminable waiting which, interspersed with spells of furious activity, makes up modern war, he was reminded fantastically of carnival-time in South America—though in this motley throng none were very gay, and all were more disposed to scatter perspiration than *confetti.*



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At the head of a laboring column, and acutely conscious of the hob-nails in his boots, Tim slithered along beside a guide over the worn paving-stones of an outlying part of the town, catching, amongst the many pungencies of the houses, a whiff of charcoal smoke that carried him back to Chile, and mingled with it another scent, which was to remain with him for ever as the very attar of the Balkans—frying goat's butter. "Better call 'em to attention 'ere, sir," advised the guide—a sallow-faced youth unnaturally thin, with the badges of the Durham Light Infantry. "That's French G.H.Q. we're coming to, where them niggers with the red 'ats is on guard."

"There seems to be a lot of movement in the town," remarked Tim, after due ceremonial.

"Reënforcements coming in, and sick back from Malter and sick going *to* Malter—oh, yes, it's proper busy. And then there's the push in the Struma valley—you'll 'ave 'eard o' that, sir"—Tim hadn't, but tactfully concealed the fact—"and then the Johnny Greeks 'ave been 'aving some kind o' trouble o' their own 'ere. There's a recruiting party." He indicated a brawny Cretan sergeant, armed to the teeth, who was enlisting volunteers by the simple process of handcuffing to a long chain every able-bodied young man who was unlucky enough not to observe his approach.

"That's a bright idea," observed Tim, much intrigued.

"It is an' all, sir. I wouldn't mind going on a job like that through our village, I wouldn't."

Curiously enough, Tim had been thinking the same thing. He could have filled up such a chain very comfortably in Valparaiso—always reserving, of course, a place for Cousin Jack of Filsley. "I didn't know Greece was in the war," he remarked.

"I 'aven't got the 'ang of it meself, sir," replied the guide. "But the lot round 'ere are. They 'ad a fair to-do a week or two ago, when Venizelos come."

They now approached the junction of four roads, where a British and an Italian military policeman were having all

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their time cut out to control the roaring traffic. "This is Piccadilly Circus, sir," said the guide, and it was quite obvious that to him it *was* Piccadilly Circus.

After waiting their turn to cross this maelstrom, which was almost as congested as its original, they trudged between the final houses of the town, most of which allured the passer-by with hospitable notices, such as *Good Boy Tommy! Black Beer Very Good!* and *Hotel Verdun. On Ne Passera Pas!* Beyond these lay a Turkish cemetery full of tombstones like skittles petrified as they tumbled, and then, surmounting a slight rise, they came in sight of a great undulating brown plain, dotted with a myriad tents and mounds of stores, which lost itself in the distance amongst barren foothills. "I got to leave you at the control post at the corner," observed the guide. "I only go that far. But the road's straight on, sir—you can't miss it. This 'ere's the Seres road; you turn off past the big motor transport camp up the Lembet road, and ask for Summer 'Ill."

"Is it far?" asked Tim.

"Not *that* far," replied the guide, with the usual optimism of Thomas Atkins regarding any distance he was not going to walk himself. "Two or three miles, p'raps. Good morning, sir."

They marched for an hour, through roaring traffic and blazing heat, and halted for the regulation ten minutes; marched for another hour, and halted again. Tim thought bitterly of the guide and his "two or three miles," and his interest in his surroundings began to give way to fatigue. He became tired of looking at Sikhs and Serbs and Scottish Women, and wondering what they were; the Salonica Base Area was not then half the size it afterwards became, but there seemed to be no end to these tented camps, and huge dumps of stores, guarded by English, French, Italian, Russian, Serbian, and Greek sentries. Cretan *gens d'armes,* in black velvet jackets and alpaca breeches with eccentric seats hanging to the knees behind, did point duty at corners. Chasseurs d'Afrique cantered through the

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dust. Greek officers in scarlet bloomers, straight out of musical comedy, twisted black mustaches and scowled; others, with the blue and white armlet of Venizelos, saluted and smiled. Once they stood back from the road to make way for a limousine which displayed a little fluttering pennant, and Tim caught a glimpse of a clean-shaven olive-skinned face, scholarly and spectacled, in the back seat. *"Le prince-héritier de la Serbie!"* said a bearded French artillery officer beside Tim on the road, his hand to the peak of his *képi*.

It was the pleasant custom of the British armies in the field to place their reception camps at the furthest site available from the point of arrival. They were called Rest Camps, whether rightly or not; at any rate, rest was every new inmate's crying necessity by the time he arrived. At length, therefore, Tim turned aside from the Seres Road, the mob on which would have astonished an Xerxes, and entered an area more exclusively British, on the extreme edge of which lay his destination, Summer Hill—an arid and desolate mound which might have been more aptly christened Dust Heap. As Tim marched his footsore following up the road between the sun-bleached and thread-bare bell tents thus pleasantly situated, the establishment looked every bit as bad as it subsequently turned out to be, and Tim felt the first wave of a depression which never afterwards entirely left him until he had parted from Macedonia for good—and not any too quickly even then. Nobody had heard, or wanted to hear, of him and his band, who, pending his inquiries, sat morosely along the water-cut at the side of the road in an exhausted silence, which they only broke to express, from time to time, their opinion that this was bloody murder. At length, however, Tim found the right Base Depot, and dragged from after-lunch slumber a reluctant and blasphemous camp adjutant, to whom he handed his nominal rolls with infinite relief. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, he had had nothing to eat since breakfast at eight, and he was conscious of a red-hot thirst and a tendency to fold up in the middle, like

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a jack-knife. It was all very well to look after the men, but Tim felt that it was about time that somebody else took a turn with this particular bunch. Another hour, and he would not have cared if they had all dropped dead, he mused exhaustedly, as he tried to locate the mess. There was only one other building in the officers' part of the camp besides the hut where he had unearthed the adjutant. No doubt that would be it.

The long tin shed was receiving the full benefit of the afternoon sun, and was not much hotter inside, possibly, than the stokehold of a steamer. It was divided by partitions into three; the central narrow strip served as a vestibule, and contained nothing except a file of camp orders, a row of pegs, and a blanket veiling the sight—but not the smell—of some inner shrine devoted to cookery. Tim looked into the apartment on the left—evidently the mess, for a trestle table, with only one trestle, reclined forlornly between a double row of empty boxes on the sand floor; except for several million flies exploring the memories of a recent meal, however, this apartment was empty. The room on the right was the ante-room; in this two pallid and haggard officers were censoring a huge pile of letters, and spattering them with perspiration in a way that must have secured for the writers credit for very deep emotions. The two gentlemen continued to curse the flies and the Tommies who had written the letters with weary venom, and took no notice of Tim.

Returning to the vestibule, he looked behind the screen and discovered what appeared to be a corpse, but was in reality a corporal in a perspiring slumber, with his face beneath that day's *Balkan News* and his body shrouded in a blanket—not for warmth, of which there was already enough to sicken a salamander, but as a buckler against the flies. Tim removed the newspaper from the corporal's features, on which a delighted quartette of his adversaries at once alighted, and he awoke and stood reluctantly upright. "I've just got in, corporal," Tim explained. "Can I get something to eat?"

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"Lunch is off, sir," replied the aroused slumberer, without troubling to look particularly put out about it. He did not decorate his present post because of any inherent capacity or pleasantness of disposition; the absence of these was the very best passport to a place of safety and comfort in any British army. "'Ave you got the unexpired portion of your day's ration?"

It was the first time that Tim had come across this mysterious comestible in the concrete, though it had been familiar enough in the text-books. "No, I haven't," he replied. "I'm afraid I never thought of asking for it on the ship. But surely you can scare up something?"

"You ought to of 'ad it, sir. We didn't ought to give you any rations to-day—not be rights. There isn't a thing left from lunch. Tea's at four."

"Well, I suppose I must wait," said the famished Tim. "What can I get to drink?"

"Bar doesn't open till 'alf past six, sir. Adjutant's orders."

"My God! bring me some water then."

"Sorry, sir. Water's all finished."

"What! Do you mean to say you can't get me a drink of any sort?"

"No, sir."

"Hell!"

The corporal looked past him through the doorway at a vista of dun-colored shadeless earth jumping in the heat, traversed by ribbons of road veiled in bellying clouds of dust, which stretched away to the battlements of Salonica, hazy in the distance. "Yes, sir," he replied, for the first time with something approaching cordiality. . . .

It was not until late that night, when Tim, trying to accustom his hip-bone—which appeared to have suddenly developed elephantiasis—to the inequalities of Macedonian soil, was seeking slumber, that he remembered with a kind of shock that he had not once during the day thought of Maudie.

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All the authorities that Tim had encountered during his training, whether official or otherwise, had been entirely vague about how you reached the front line. There was no lack of experts to tell you what they had done and what you ought to do—especially the former—once you got there, but the intervening stage might have been covered on a Magic Carpet, for all Tim knew about it. He spent three endless days at Summer Hill, waiting in military style for somebody to tell him what to do next. Then some Olympian nodded, and one afternoon Tim found himself confronting a party of soldiery who were to be conducted to the railway.

They were returned invalids from hospital, and Tim's immediate thought, when he saw them, was that they ought to go to bed at once. That is where they would have been, no doubt, but for the fact that beds were scarcer in Salonica during the summer of 1916 than in Blackpool during Oldham Wakes. Somebody should have remembered beforehand, of course, that Macedonia was only slightly less deadly than Panama used to be; but, as very often occurs in England's military adventures, somebody hadn't.

Although the weather was still very hot, the men were wearing winter khaki, and carried the winter allowance of two blankets each and a leather jerkin—for it had not escaped the far-sighted intelligence of the military machine that even if it was not winter yet, it would be sooner or later. Furthermore, they carried rifles, packs, steel helmets, gas masks, and a couple of hundred rounds of ammunition. It did not need a Napoleon to notice that all this seemed heavy. "How far is it to the railway, sir?" Tim asked the camp adjutant dubiously.

"Dunno. About five miles. Why?"

"Some of these chaps will never do it."

"None of my business—nor yours—if they drop down dead," said the adjutant, lowering (his qualifications for his post were much the same as those of the mess corporal). "Rolls correct? Then carry on!"

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Tim carried on, and after half a mile or so the first of his following to give up did so, and collapsed groaning by the wayside. Leaving a sergeant to shepherd these stragglers, Tim moved slowly across country at the head of an ever-diminishing band, which, exhausted, speechless and deaf to any order, seemed to follow at his heels by instinct. It seemed a very long way before they breasted a final rise, and the corporal beside Tim remarked with satisfaction: "Ah! Doodle-ar!" This was an enigma to Tim, but he gathered that the end was near, and sure enough after stumbling down the descent they debouched upon a railway platform displaying on a large newly-painted sign the name Dudular. As the remnants of the party cast itself groaning to the ground, without waiting to be asked, Tim wondered which of the regulations might be supposed to fit this incident, and whether a man could be shot for disobeying an order when he had been given so much quinine that he couldn't bear it. The Railway Transport Officer, over whose bare arms the flies were crawling unheeded, received their depleted ranks without comment. No doubt he was used to it.

Having delivered over his charge, Tim disposed his valise upon the platform and sat on it, smoking. After a while the train came in, and he installed himself in a rickety third-class coach with glassless windows—the only passenger accommodation. Military trains are not particular when they start, and Tim was lucky, had he but known it, in having only waited an hour before they moved off into a darkening landscape. There was nobody else in the carriage, which soon grew inky dark, and he propped himself against his valise and slept. He had never been in a train before without knowing where he was going, but it seemed to matter astonishingly little.

He was awakened by shunting, and by a red glare on the roof above him. Outside the window was a leafy Balkan station, where men struggled and swore amongst mules and cases by the Rembrandtesque smoky light of paraffin flares. An officer, carrying a storm-lantern, came

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down the train, and Tim leaned out to accost him. "What's this place?" he enquired.

"Karasuli. What unit are you for?"

"8th Royal West Pennines."

"All right—stay where you are. Let's see—" He puzzled over a typewritten sheet. "8th R.W.P. Oh, here it is. Kalinova's your station. Look out for it."

Soon they were on the move again, in the light of a rising moon. Though Tim, of course, did not know it, they were now following a loop line parallel to the front. Several times they stopped at dumps, and delivered bales and boxes to waiting mules and limbers. Drafts of men descended and clumped away into the night. An intense hush covered everything. Tim had always had the idea that the front was one continual uproar, and he could not understand this nor reconcile it with the ordered scramble to be away. It seemed genuine enough, and he heard somebody in authority say at one place: "*Get* a move on, for Christ's sake. Know what happened here the other night, don't you?" There was also an intermittent flashing in the sky to the north which he decided at length must be summer lightning. Not being familiar with the baffling acoustics of the Balkan hills, he did not realize that he was in a "deaf pocket."

At last he caught the name of the place where he had been told to descend. The waiting limbers filled up and went away; the train rolled on, and left him standing by his valise in solitary perplexity. He had not the faintest idea as to what ought to happen next. He looked at his watch; it was two in the morning. Then he heard the clatter of hoofs rapidly approaching, and a voice hailed from the shadows. "Is there an officer for the Pennines 'ere?" it enquired.

"That's right," replied Tim in great relief.

"'Ere's your 'orse, sir," said the voice, the owner of which was disclosed as a bandy-legged soldier leading a spare mount. "The limber's comin' up for your kit."

Tim mounted, and was wheeling his horse to follow his

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companion when he heard the most extraordinary moaning sound, rapidly increasing in intensity. "What's that?" he asked, and as he spoke the moan increased to a strident roar, and some heavy body struck the ground by the railway line. There was a grinding crash, and a mushroom of stones and dirt rose against the moonlit sky. Tim became aware that he was galloping full tilt after the groom; as the wind sped past his ears he heard the moan and crash of another shell, bursting near the first.

After a brisk quarter of a mile the groom pulled in his horse. "Are you all right, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"Quite, thanks," replied Tim, much excited. "Were they shooting at us? How did they know we were here?"

The groom chuckled respectfully at his innocence.

"It weren't us, sir, it were t'ration train," he explained. "Only they was a bit late. You can 'ear it quite plain up the line, and they 'as a go most nights, but it takes a bit of 'ittin' like. I 'ad proper wind up you might fall off, sir; lots of the gentlemen isn't very good with 'orses."

Tim scarcely heard him. He was full of the romance and exhilaration of being under fire—a feeling, it may be said, which wore off with remarkable celerity.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### *"THE ROUGH AND TOUGHS"*

MUCH heartened by a few hours' sleep at the Battalion Transport Officer's little camp in the hills near the railway, where the sound of many mules hailing the sun had roused him, Tim set forth beside a guide on the last stage of his journey, into an emptier landscape than he had ever imagined. There was not a house, not a hedge, not a field, scarcely a tree even, to break the view. Purple on the northern skyline were the rugged mountains of Serbia, and on an intervening ridge occasional fountains of earth marked the business end of the activities of a heavy battery, which was firing with somnolent regularity from some invisible retreat among the nearby ravines. These, and an intermittent vague tracery of newly turned soil crossing the flanks of hills, were the only signs of man. Tortoises alone moved, and an insect like a giant cricket cheeped interminably in the sun-warmed bushes, as if the whole land were vibrating in the heat.

Soon the way by which they had come was obscured by a shoulder of the hill, and they could no longer see the transport camp and the railway, and the great sweep of lake, marsh, and barren upland, which lay to the south and behind them. They walked openly and unmolested along a well-rutted and evidently much-used track, on which, however, they seemed to be the only travelers. After a while they came to a wrecked and roofless village, on the mud walls of which restless regiments of crows jostled noisily. "What's this place?" asked Tim.

"Ardzan, sir."

"Looks pretty badly knocked about."

"It was like that when we come 'ere, sir," replied the



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guide virtuously, for all the world like a a housemaid with a broken plate.

The hamlet was breast deep in a tangle of bushes and briars, and it occurred to Tim how it could have been shelled into such ruin without disturbing the vegetation, and why the Macedonians affected blackberry culture to such an extent. Then he realized that war had been almost a permanent state of affairs in these parts, and that he and his like were merely passing players in a very old theater. This was a bit of some one else's war.

From this depressing place the path declined steeply, and Tim found himself without warning in the midst of the Eighth Battalion The Royal West Pennine Regiment (late 191st Foot, "The Rough and Toughs,") with eighteen battle honors on their colors. They were scarcely what he had expected. He had had a vision, born of much study in army manuals, of a reserve entrenchment in which a garrison in steel helmets, so many to each fire bay, would be busy with soldierly tasks. Instead he saw a rocky little ravine, on the sides of which numbers of small shelters, half tent, half dugout, were clinging like wasps' nests, each with its own horseshoe drain to keep off surface water. The troglodyte inhabitants of these abodes, to a man pallid and cadaverous, were sunning themselves on the rocks of the ravine like so many baboons and some of them were intensifying this resemblance by hunting—and not big game. Others were washing their underwear in the stream, and pounding the same grimly with stones. They wore indiscriminately the shorts and sun-helmets of summer, or khaki trousers and caps; those favoring the latter displayed various fancy ideas in braces. Few rifles were visible, and what equipment there was lay about, or hung on the poles of the bivouacs. The hillside footpaths of this community bore no resemblance to trenches; there was something of a Church Lads' Summer Camp about the scene, and something of a brigands' den.

As he threaded his way between the bowlders in the

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streamside at the heels of his guide, Tim was conscious of disappointment not unmixed with contempt. He had not seen these men eighteen months before, when they had paraded, nine hundred and seventy strong, at Prees Heath in Shropshire; the fine flower of England, trained to a hair, as they had been before they met the foe who goes singing into battle and works unseen in the dusk, turning strong soldiers into invalids, and their officers into doctors —Old Man Mosquito. And of course, no one who had not seen could possibly have imagined the change.

. . . . . .

Tim, after reporting at battalion headquarters, retraced his steps down the ravine in search of A Company, to which he had been instructed to attach himself. The guide had left him at the first chance, and soon he was at a loss; he rapped, therefore, on the side of a tin shed, which was belching smoke from every crevice. Immediately a voice made outcry in a high and exaggerated falsetto: "Can I have a piece of your cook-'ouse, Smith, to make meself a nice dugout?"

Tim disregarded this irony, and came round to the front of the edifice, wherein a field cooking range of mud-coated tin, which looked all of one piece with the ground, and in the top of which dixies were smoking, gave a peculiar effect of subterranean fires. "Beg pardon, sir," said the cook, whose large round shining face was much obscured with the soot of his calling. "Thought it were one of the lads on the scrounge."

"Is this A Company?" enquired Tim.

"Yessir. That's the mess, sir." He indicated a cliff-dwelling of rather more consideration than the others. It boasted a sort of arbor outside, made of reeds; the roof was of tiles, and it had a pair of French windows, no doubt looted from the derelict village above. These windows were completely devoid of glass, and had evidently been added to give the place an air.

Tim thrust his head inside the doorway, and was confronted by the seat of a very broad-beamed pair of

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breeches, which had been lavishly patched with some discrepant material. The owner of these was vigorously nailing pieces of board, stenciled with the brand of a well-known whisky, to the framework of a table, which reposed upon its side. Entangled with the legs of this piece of furniture were two other gentlemen locked in breathless strife. "Hoy!" said the carpenter, pausing in his labors. "You'll be getting nailed on to the table in a minute!"

"Mr. Meadows?" enquired Tim, as instructed by the adjutant.

He was not observed. Another officer, standing on a box in the corner, waved on the warfare with a mug. "Strafe him, Doc!" he roared. "Show him what you did to Colin Bell!"

The combatants rocked in renewed battle, and lurched against a plank arranged between two boxes, on which a mass of periodicals, bottles, papers, and gramophone records staggered drunkenly. The faces of the company suddenly betrayed extreme anxiety. "Mind the records, you fools!" they cried in chorus.

"Mr. Meadows?" said Tim politely.

The carpenter turned his head. "Hullo!" he remarked. "Hoy, Meadows!"

The undermost of the belligerents removed his antagonist with a convulsive heave, and sat up. "Oh, sorry," he observed. "Didn't see you. I was attacked by this thug; he calls himself a Doctor of Medicine."

"My name's Staveley," said Tim, saluting. "Reporting for duty."

"Come inside," rejoined the other. "The adjutant said you were coming. You're just in time for lunch. Take your things off, won't you? Clear off, Doc, to your own scouse; no cadging here to-day."

Tim unburdened himself of his steel helmet and gas mask, and shook hands with the company in the sheepish manner prescriptive to Englishmen on such occasions. The doctor, a wooden-faced individual of delusively sol-

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emn appearance, was introduced with the rest. "If ever you want to see me alone," he remarked darkly "—alone, you understand—I am usually—"

"Jigger off, Doc," said Meadows, a stalwart youth of three-and-twenty, with mouse-colored hair, a faint mustache, and a singularly quiet and charming manner. The medico, thus admonished, jiggered off.

"What will you drink?" asked a short stocky subaltern, who possessed a service cap which somehow resembled a jockey's, a subtle air of having had to do with horses, and a trick of looking at his company with one eye, like a bird. He rinsed out a solitary tumbler, a quarter of an inch thick, which was evidently a vessel of honor. "We've got whisky, gin and vermouth, or Château Sheffield. But I ought to warn you that the Château Sheffield's a bit like syrup of figs, only it's raisins of course."

"I'll have whisky, thanks. But what is Château Sheffield?"

"It's Greek wine," explained the other, "and old Saunders here"—he indicated the carpenter, who had renewed his labors—"bought it in Salonique on his last leave at a shop kept by an Englishman called Sheffield. He ought to be damn well made to pay for it; but as he was probably hopelessly tight at the time— What is it, Wilkins?"

A gingerously hirsute face was thrust through the door of the little earthen cell. "Will you 'ave lunch, sir?" enquired its owner.

"We will, when Mr. Saunders has finished that table—if he ever does."

"How can I, when you fools will barge about all over the ruddy dugout?" protested Mr. Saunders, who had taken no notice of the other's previous aspersions except to grin all over his pleasant ugly features.

"Well, get on with it, you old ass," retorted the horsy one. "This officer will be here for lunch, Wilkins, and from now on. I hope you've got enough grub. What's for lunch?"

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"Bully rissoles and rice, sir, a tin o' that pineapple, and there's a gradely cheese ration to-day."

"Oh, started winter rations, have they? Well, I'll ring when we're ready."

Tim was a little surprised to hear such a conventional remark in these surroundings, until he observed a cord hanging from the center of the roof over a nail, which evidently worked some rudimentary tintinnabulator outside—this was, in point of fact, an eighteen-pounder cartridge case. The dugout was about ten feet by six; it was furnished with a number of boxes and an ingenious armchair of boxwood and sacking. The walls were decorated with a colored portrait by Kirschner of a lady with nothing on but shoes and stockings and a hat, posting a letter with a heart-shaped seal, and a photograph of the chorus of *Theodore and Co.*, culled from the *Sketch* or the *Tatler*. "I see you looking round our happy home," said the officer who had brandished the mug, a black-a-vised gentleman of some thirty summers, now sitting on the floor in a corner. "Not bad, is it?"

"Very nice," agreed Tim. "Did you build it?"

"Oh, no. We took it over from the French. A second glance will no doubt reveal to you the Gallic influence in its architecture. The summer palace outside, for instance"—he waved a hand at the reed arbor—"and in here—" he indicated what looked like a fireplace without a back, lined in timber,—"is a most commodious cavern, which one can only suppose is intended as a *garçonnière*. As a funk-hole it is no earthly; the first shell in the vicinity would bring down the roof. What a noise you do make, Saunders."

Tim idly stretched out a hand for Meadows' signal pad and pencil, and drew on the back of a form with half a dozen swift strokes Saunders' bent back and patched breeches. "By Gad!" remarked the jockey-like young man, taking the sketch from under his fingers. "That's damn good! That's Saunders to the life."

Meadows looked at the drawing and smiled. "Clever,"

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he observed. "How do you manage to get that look of effort into the thing like that? Note the beauty of his Grecian bend! Saunders, you look handsomest from this direction."

The carpenter, hammering in a final nail, grinned at the sketch as he righted the table.

"We must keep this until to-morrow," continued Meadows. "It may be worth money. 'Portrait of the Salonica V.C.'"

"As seen by the enemy," added the somber gentleman.

"Why?" asked Tim. "What's happening to-day?"

"To-night," replied Meadows, with his charming smile, as the mess waiter appeared with a stack of green enameled plates, which he dealt out like so much correspondence, "Saunders is going to do battle with the foe."

"Oh, really?" said Tim, greatly interested. "Where?"

"If you like, we'll go out after lunch, when most o' these officers will be hogging it on their beds, and I'll show you. You don't have any duty to do in your first twenty-four hours. By the way, I suppose your kit will be up to-night? You'd better dig in with Saunders—he's got nothing infectious, in spite of his looks. You can make room can't you, Saunders? I'll see about a servant for you. Clavering, you're a rotten mess president—this is the third time in two days we've had bully rissoles—"

. . . . . .

After lunch Tim and his company commander climbed out of the ravine, picking their way between the little canvas shelters and surface drains, and passing Mr. Clavering, who was supervising the assembly of a Lewis gun on a waterproof sheet, to emerge upon an arid undulating plateau, shimmering and dancing in the afternoon sun, which lay above the camp. There Meadows, the shoulders of his khaki shirt black with flies, expounded much wisdom—the lie of the front, the difficulty of judging distance in an empty landscape, and the waging of war with sick troops and few materials against an enemy inversely equipped.

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"And what is Saunders going to do?" asked Tim.

Meadows explained. It was a trench raid, and it seemed, on the face of it, even more impossible than most, which is saying a good deal.

"It seems a lot of trouble, and not much chance of doing anything," said Tim. "Why do it?"

"We have to. These things originate higher up. Brigade are expecting quite a haul of prisoners, so Saunders was told. Well, of course, I don't know. . . . We haven't done much of this sort of thing so far; they may be right. Anyhow, I've no doubt Saunders will do what's possible."

"He seems a capable sort of chap."

"Saunders? Oh, yes. Thoroughly good man. Really a first-class man—though, of course, a frightful old ass," observed Meadows. "One can't help pulling his leg." Lucky indeed are the frightful old asses of this sort, who know their jobs and whose legs no one can help pulling, for they are more esteemed by their fellow-men than kings and emperors. "Now we'll just walk up as far as those trenches. Those are what we would have to occupy in case of attack. In a week or two, of course, if drafts keep coming up the way they have been, we'll be strong enough to go into line, and we'll probably take over from the Salchesters. We work on these trenches by night, but we don't hang about them by day, or it draws shelling."

"Ah!" said Tim. "I begin to see. I wondered where your trenches were. But I rather expected you'd be in 'em."

"Well, in theory we are. But if there was an attack by day our observation post would see them coming at least five miles off, and at night the whole company's up there digging. So we don't stand up to be shot at. You'd better go up with Gregory to-morrow night and see what's being done. Most of our chaps will be out on the raid to-night, so it's not worth going."

"Gregory? That was the dark-faced fellow in the mess? I didn't get the names very well."

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"That's right. He's Arnold Gregory, the novelist, you know. He wrote *The Soft Lips of Marguerite* and *Passion's Sting* and other things like that; love stories. But don't rag him about it; he says the thought of them makes him feel sick. He'd like to write books on philosophy really—he's a very clever chap. It's as well to look out for him after ten o'clock at night, or the fifth whisky, because his sense of honor gets very delicate about then. A little later on he's geniality itself." Meadows' eyes twinkled. "We might as well turn back now."

"Well, I must say," observed Tim, as they came down into the ravine and heard the gurgle of its stream again, "everything seems very quiet and pleasant here."

Meadows hastily embraced the wooden beam of an anti-aircraft Lewis gun mounting. "We had three men laid out by a Five Nine shell yesterday afternoon," he observed. "Don't speak so loud."

"*Did* you?"

"Yes. This place is deceptive."

"It's not as bad as France, anyway."

"Isn't it? You wait. In both places, if you stay long enough you stop one, and to my mind you might as well be killed in three days as three hundred, if you are going to be killed. And there are compensations in France—billets out of the line, and the chance of leave, or a blighty one. But once you get to Salonica nothing gets you out of it. I suppose we shan't be done with Macedonia until the war's over."

He was an unconscious optimist. If only it had stopped short at that, he and his like would merely have known the least of it.

. . . . . .

With the coming of darkness the lotus-eating aspect of Ardzan Ravine vanished. The officers dined hurriedly, and went about their various occupations. Saunders gathered his following, inspected their bombs and rifles, and withdrew into the night. With him went the morose author of *Passion's Sting,* who had fortified himself with

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much strong waters; he was bound with ten men for the headquarters of the Salchesters, to wait for the vast hordes of prisoners which the sanguine brigadier expected to acquire—as a preliminary to a Companionship of the Bath—from the exertions of Saunders. As he stepped out beside his comrade he whistled lugubriously: "In enterprise of martial kind, when there was any fighting." Clavering crammed a tin hat on the side of his head, at just the angle at which he would have sported a topper in the hunting field, and took the rest of the company out to dig. Tim and Meadows remained in talk in the mess dugout until the latter went out to visit his sentries and the working party. "I shouldn't wait up for the raid, if I were you, Staveley," he advised. "It isn't timed to come off until one, and there'll be nothing to see from here."

Tim, who had had little sleep on the previous night, took his advice, and went to bed in his first dugout, under one of those quadrants of steel known as elephant irons. An interval of dubious length ensued, and then he was awakened by the noise of heavy bodies tumbling down the ravine outside. For a moment he could not remember where he was, and then, recalling that he was at the front, he seized his revolver and hurried out. The dim outlines of two privates with fixed bayonets loomed against the sky on the bank above; from below came a confused plunging sound. "Good Lord!" exclaimed the voice of Gregory in wondering tones, articulated with careful precision. "What in the world have I got round my ankle? It's as dark as the pit."

"What are you up to?" Tim asked, putting down the revolver and feeling for the candle.

The only reply was the sound of splashing water. Tim struck a light, and as the flame burned up in the windless air discerned Gregory sitting on the ground beside the dugout, with his foot entangled in the rope handle of Saunders' canvas bucket. He had lost his melancholy, and seemed to be hugely amused. "Walked clean over the top in the dark," he explained cheerfully. "Where's my

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Bulgar? Oh, there he is." Tim now looked beyond, and observed an abject little Hebraic-looking person in an unfamiliar uniform, sitting on the ground with his legs spread out and staring at the flame with the unwinking stare of a frightened rabbit.

"Let's go into the mess and have a look at him," suggested Gregory, scrambling to his feet. He summoned the two privates, and the party, accompanied by the wondering Tim, trooped into the darkness of the mess. Gregory lit the candles rather unsteadily, and all sat down, the Bulgar between the two grinning Tommies on the seat opposite to the two officers. The prisoner was in an obvious blue funk, and reminded Tim of the characters in *Potash and Perlmutter,* a play he had seen in London.

"Salonique? Salonique?" chattered the prisoner, making a transverse gesture with his forefinger across his thorax.

"Good Lord, he thinks he's going to get his throat cut at Salonica," cried Gregory loudly. *"Non, non, pas du tout,* old bean. Where's the beer, Staveley? Give the poor beggar some beer."

Tim reached into the corner for the rum jar, which contained the mess supply of thin Greek beer, and poured out a drink all round. The Bulgar eyed this as if it were poison. "There you are, old son. *Bière!"* encouraged Gregory.

"Ha! *Bière!"* replied the Bulgar, grasping the idea. He stood up, saluted with ceremony, and sat down again.

"Very pretty! Ve-ry pretty," approved his captor ponderously. "What do you think of him, Staveley? He's a unique specimen—never before exhibited. And one more than I expected, at that."

"He looks a bit insanitary," observed Tim. "What are you going to do with him?"

"Take him to Brigade."

"What about a souvenir, sir?" enquired one of the escort, fingering one of the prisoner's greatcoat buttons longingly.

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"Good idea!" replied Gregory. "Where's a knife? All right, old son, don't get wind up. It's your buttons we want, not your blood." And without more ado he divested the Bulgar of the crested buttons, bearing the lion rampant, which graced his uniform. The little man turned pale with terror as the knife was produced, and was so relieved at the harmless *dénouement* that he indicated several buttons at the back which were in danger of being overlooked. Fortunately for his convenience, his trouser buttons proved to be uninteresting.

"Well! Well!" remarked Gregory, after partitioning this loot. "Must be pushing off, I suppose. Cheery-ho!"

He gathered his following together, and disappeared boisterously on his way, leaving Tim much diverted. Dinner at the headquarters of a company of the Salchesters, and bridge afterwards, had whiled away the time very pleasantly for Mr. Gregory until ten o'clock or so, when a chance remark on the part of his host regarding his method of calling trumps happened to coincide with the critical period of his potations to which Meadows had referred, and he withdrew in dudgeon, threatening to report his entertainer to the Army Council unless he received a written apology by nine next morning. However an interlude with the subaltern on trench duty, who possessed a pocket flask, restored his good humor, and at about two in the morning Saunders arrived with his solitary capture. It was obviously impossible to convoy this shrinking soul to Brigade Headquarters with an escort of ten men, and Gregory had sent eight of them to their bivouacs.

The call which he had paid on Tim evidently commended itself to him, for on his way to Brigade he visited B and D Companies, a signal company of the Royal Engineers, and a Siege Battery. All of these were interested and hospitable, and by the time the shrouded dugouts of Brigade came in sight Gregory and his captive had sworn eternal friendship, and the latter was understood to be offering himself for enrollment in the British forces.

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He parted from his escort in a tearful reluctant embrace on the Ardzan road, and the brigadier found his demeanor unaccountably frivolous, and received a very poor impression of the disciplinary state of the Bulgarian army . . .

. . . . . .

The raid? The raid, of course, like most raids, had been a frost. Five of the Pennines were missing; three of them turned up in due course in the prison camps of Philippopolis, and two gradually became a part of that soil which, so the Iron Chancellor once said, was not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. Saunders came back heavy-hearted, and slept for ten hours—or as much of them as he was allowed by the shower of telegrams from the exasperated Powers That Were, who thinking bitter things of these Kitchener fellows and the New Year Honors, were already making up their minds to do the very same hopeless thing again next week.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### *UNCLE GEORGE'S NEPHEWS*

TIM had fully intended to take advantage of the first breathing space to consider what ought to be done about Maudie, and he did consider it at length during those first early days—in the long dark hours of digging in the Ardzan redoubts, walking round the pickets of the sketchy front line during the night watches, and on those cold mornings when, waked by a casual shell, he lay between damp blankets listening to the rain beating on the bivouac sheet four inches above his nose, in squashy battalion reserve. But there did not seem to be anything to be done; and more and more, as the days went on, it was borne in upon him that it did not matter whether anything was done or not. So he tore up several letters of reproach, which seemed somehow ridiculous in face of the elementary Living and Dying around him, and at last wrote: "I have found out all about you. Don't exceed your allowance or you won't get another check. I will see about you when I get home—if I ever do."

He then made a soldier's will, leaving his property to his Chilian cousins, and troubled no more about his matrimonial complications. And when, after a few weeks, a reply came back most plausibly full of expressions of contrition and affection, and parcels began to arrive which had been discriminately assembled—for Maudie cordially concurred in defining genius as the infinite capacity for taking pains—he was even amused, and wrote: "I don't believe a word you say, of course, but there doesn't seem to be any use in bothering about it now. You might put an extra refill for Tommy's Cooker in the next parcel."

Life, which had gone with such breathless rapidity during the last year, now retarded as if in compensation



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to the labored crawl of a slow-motion camera. In all that endless winter Tim never saw a civilian nor slept in a house, and he had only two hot baths. The days were filled with endless tasks, which wearied the bones and exhausted the muscles so that one slept like a tired animal —in mud or on rocks, with one's boots for a pillow. But nothing ever seemed to happen. Time stood still. There was no Future; within three days, when Tim saw a man, coming up from the stream at Ardzan with his wet shirt in his hands and slightly behind his fellows in a rush for shelter, suddenly smashed into a mess of bloody rags and boots by a howling demon from above, he realized that there was no Future. He looked forward at furthest to the next camp; the ambitions of this child of twenty centuries of civilization were bounded by a craving for a few sheets of corrugated iron to sleep under and another to sleep on, so that he might not have to lie in the wet— and even these modest hopes were seldom fulfilled. There was a Present, and that was the war. It was obviously going to last for ever, though, personally speaking, it might be over next minute. There was no Past; that belonged to another Tim, who had slept in clean sheets and taken an interest in books and pictures, had expected to do big things at a University, and possessed a family and friends on the other side of the world. This chilblained, wind-roughened creature, tramping the desolate Macedonian hills at the head of steel-helmeted Lancashire pitmen, was surely another being.

For the rest, he was in a way not unhappy; for he and his fellows were too miserable to be miserable, or to care much what happened, and once that stage is reached mirth comes easily. A twisted sense of humor came to their aid, and when it seemed that the limit had been reached, and the depths of human misery plumbed, they would roar out to the sodden skies, officers and men alike, incongrous music-hall inanities or the unprintable inherited songs of the army.

Any man with even the smallest powers of banishing

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boredom was called upon to use them. Tim's gift for drawing, and especially of caricature, made him welcome round capped and coated dinner-tables, candle-lit, slotted in the ground. After a few months this small fame, and a certain ability in finding his way, which was no doubt derived from those long-distant Chilian rambles in not dissimilar scenery, brought him the small alleviation of battalion intelligence work, and relief from company duty. He now devoted himself to compasses, observation posts, and the training of a selected few in distinguishing their own trenches from the enemy's. He never succeeded in making Red Indians out of cotton operatives, but he did in time drive into the thick skulls of his following the notion that a private soldier could do something else besides blunder along at the heels of an officer, and that every man has eyes in his head. He himself learned as he taught, and gradually became wise in the use of telescopes and binoculars, and in the inaccuracies of the sketchy maps which the Engineers were beginning to make of that uncharted country. Usually he lived at battalion headquarters, but when sickness was heavy and officers short he would do a spell or two of company duty. This ranging about made him intimate with all the various figures of his little world—Captain Carnforth, the ex-naval petty officer, who commanded B Company; Captain M'Fee, the Ulsterman, who commanded C, and preached sedition and the need for discipline at the same time; Pilnitz, the Hebrew, whose father was a Hatton Garden diamond dealer; Thornycroft, solicitor and expert in bombs; little Billings, who had been training for the church, and talked the inevitable blasphemy of the army in the manner of *The Private Secretary;* and many another of the salt of the earth, as they came and went.

. . . . . .

One evening of the June of 1917, Tim scrambled down the barren side of the Pip Ridge, that Balkan Vimy, from the haggled little redoubt which bestrode its crest, into an unhallowed wrinkle in the great bulk of the mountain

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called Jackson's Ravine. The calm benediction of the Macedonian summer sunset had fallen over the sullen hills, bringing relief to nerves tautened by the furious heat of the day now over. Down in the ravine the first mosquitoes were beginning their canticles; Tim could see "Quack" Warren, one of A Company's subalterns, superintending the administration of a particularly vile-tasting malaria prophylactic to a reluctant soldiery, and inspecting their anti-mosquito toilette of veils and linen gauntlets.

"Quack" was moving about freely, in evident relief after many hours of forced inactivity, for in the daytime the least stir provoked a shower of machine-gun bullets or shrapnel. The northern slope of Jackson's Ravine was as steep as the side of a house, and at the top the advanced Bulgarian trenches, invisible from below, were a source of heavy trench mortar bombs and other unpleasantnesses. Down the ravine the garrison was nakedly exposed to Bulgar eyes, for the British strong point on the ridge above was like a spear-head thrust deep into the enemy lines. There were flimsy shelters in the dry watercourse at the foot of the ravine; shrapnel bullets and iron shards rolled underfoot, and the torn and ripped sandbags and corrugated iron testified to the excellence of the position as a target.

Tim looked into the company headquarters, a hut of sand-bags with the exposed flank enormously thick, and discovered Messrs. Gregory and Clavering reading newspapers by the light of a candle, with their steel helmets on. "Hullo!" he remarked. "How goes it?"

The horsy gentleman looked at him sideways, after his fashion. "Hullo, map-*wallah!*" he replied. "I'd come in if I were you; they have a way of spraying that footpath with a machine-gun about now. We're not doing so badly. Only four killed and nine wounded since we came here on Saturday. What are you doing in these parts?"

"Taking out a patrol from P. 4½ at nine," answered Tim. "Have you heard how Saunders is getting on?"

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Saunders had had a difference with a German stick grenade, and was in hospital for repairs.

"All right, so I hear. One of the water mules was killed last night; we only just got it dug in by dawn. And do you know, even in those four hours the brute swelled out like a balloon? I hope a shell doesn't hit it; it's not buried very deep."

Warren came up the ravine, making a wry face. It was the duty of every officer to set an example with the quinine ration. "You know, I don't believe that all this anti-mosquito stunt does much good," he observed, as he approached the door. "My experience is that Old Man Anopheles looks on that pomade they issue as a sort of Gentleman's Relish. And, my aunt, doesn't that quinine taste bloodsome? What wouldn't I give for a drink?"

Clavering cocked an eye at him. "We've some chlorinated water—nice and warm too," he remarked.

"I said a drink," retorted Warren.

Gregory looked up longingly at a niche in the sand-bag wall, wherein was enshrined a solitary bottle of whisky, virgin and untouched—the last. "I don't think things can possibly get any worse," he remarked with watering lips. "What about murdering the orphan?"

"Nothing doing," said Clavering firmly. "You know the rule. Last bottle's the iron ration, in case some one gets pipped, or we really get up against it."

Warren gulped down a mug of water, and went off about his business again. Meadows, thin and pallid, perspiring from the exertion of inspecting night dispositions on the steeps above, appeared in the doorway, and tilted back his steel helmet from a sweat-bedewed brow; on his forearm a displaced bandage exposed a septic sore the size of a sixpence. "Hullo, Staveley," he remarked, seating himself heavily. "Whew! Thank God the flies are settling down at last."

"Morgan!" called Clavering, without moving.

"Sir!" replied an astral voice, apparently in the dug-out.

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"Captain's in. Dinner!"

"What's Morgan doing mess waiter for?" asked Tim. "You haven't given him the sack, have you, Meadows?"

"Good Lord, no. He's been my batman since 1914. But we're so short of men just now that we have to make do without a mess waiter."

"What is there for dinner, Morgan?" asked Clavering, as the servant came in with the plates.

"Bully, sir. Or there's a tin o' tongue, sir. But they've both run, like, with the 'eat."

"No bread, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Biscuits, sir."

"Haven't we anything else besides bully?"

"There's a tin o' crab, sir."

"Right ho! Crab it is."

Morgan withdrew from the presence backwards—not through awe, but because the door was only four feet high—and soon returned with the simple meal. Meadows poured himself out some chlorinated water. "It's a devil of a beastly, gritty war," he remarked.

As everybody present made this remark several times a day, it was not considered to call for any particular reply. The company continued to chew heavily on ration biscuits. "The joke of it all is," said Gregory at length, smearing a biscuit with jam, "that when we've finished fighting in it, we shall have to go home and pay for it."

Clavering laughed. "They'll have a devil of a job if they expect *me* to pay for it," he replied.

"You may talk," retorted the novelist, "but you'll pay, all the same. This war's ruin, especially for anybody that takes part in it."

"I don't see that," argued Clavering. "I should think it was rather the other way round. Whatever happens, the people at home will be ready enough to give an old soldier a leg up after all this. Why, you've only got to read the papers."

Gregory looked at him with scorn. "You simple idiot!" he observed. "Do you think the war's going to change

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human-nature? They may intend to do these things now, while they're healthily afraid of the Hun. But you wait until it's all over. Everybody will be only too keen to forget about the war and everything connected with it, including 'our brave boys in the trenches.'"

"Oh, rot!"

"They will. It'll be bad enough for the men who have something to go back to, but for the fellows that have to hunt up a job. . . . The business instinct will survive all right, you know; I know the breed—I was in an office until I took to writing bilge for a living. Fat old gentlemen, who've been shivering in their boots since 1914, will put their thumbs in the armholes of their waistcoats, and offer infantry captains a pound a week—take it or leave it. Being a good company officer's no recommendation in trade, and there'll be plenty on the market. For instance—what are you going to do if you come through, Clavering?"

"My guv'nor's got a bit of a place in the country—"

"Well, he won't have it for long when the war taxes get at him. You, Meadows?"

"Oh, I'm all right. I was in an insurance company, and they're keeping my job open for me."

"Yes. And when you get back you'll find some shyster who ought to have joined up has been put over your head, and you'll have to take his orders for the rest of your life."

"Hang it, they wouldn't do a thing like that. No one would put up with it; and besides, what good would it do?" Meadows spoke a little doubtfully, however, for he knew who was running things in his old department.

"Well, you'll see! You, Staveley?"

Tim was unpleasantly conscious that the war had already led him into at least one radical error. "I hadn't decided what I was going to do," he replied. "I was just going to a university when—"

"You're done for already. You'll never be able to settle down after this."

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"It seems to me," said Meadows, "that the only person who's going to be all right, according to your reasoning, is yourself."

Gregory laughed bitterly. "I? I shall be worse off than any of you. Do you think that I shall be able to go on writing tripe for soulful spinsters with all this behind me?"

"It's a black business, no doubt," said Meadows. "But the immediate problem is that ninety gallon tank that the R.E.'s are sending up to-night. I can hear them unloading it. If you've finished eating you might step down, will you, Gregory, and see that they don't make much more noise than a boiler factory?"

The novelist settled his steel helmet on his head, and slithered away down the shrapnel-pitted ravine. "Old Greg's been in a devilish queer temper all to-day," remarked Clavering.

Meadows smiled his gentle smile. "He's a man of moods," he said. There was no Highlander present to recognize the significance of Gregory's condition.

"Do you think it'll be as he says after the war?"

"Oh, no," replied Meadows. "Dash it, it couldn't be."

"No, it couldn't be," agreed Tim.

"I suppose not," said Clavering.

There was a whistle and a roar, and a succession of deafening crashes which shook the little shelter. "Evening hate," said Meadows, re-lighting the candle. "I wonder if they've got anybody?"

Clavering stepped out into the ravine, and called: "Anybody hit?"

Tim heard a confused shouting, and a running of feet. Then: "Mr. Gregory, sir, he's—"

"Good God!" said Clavering, and vanished at the double.

He returned accompanied by a slow-moving party, which laid with clumsy carefulness a bloody Something on the little slab of earth which formed the mess table, and from which the mugs and empty plates were hastily

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pushed aside. Meadows busied himself with a knife and the tattered drill shirt, and for an instant his eyes met Tim's, and he shook his head slightly. Clavering reached down the bottle of whisky from its niche, drew the cork, and slopped the neat spirit into a mug. "Have a drink," Gregory," he said.

The Something groaned; evidently its tenant still dwelt within it. "Thanks," replied Gregory in a throaty whisper. "Got me properly, I'm afraid. Hadn't time to get down."

"Where are the stretcher-bearers?" asked Meadows, aside.

"Coming up, sir," replied Morgan from the doorway.

They waited in silence, only broken by the ripping of cloth and the snap of the thread of the inadequate field dressings, and the slow drip of something which trickled over the mess table into the little trench which surrounded it. Then the wounded man opened his eyes again, and was seen to be trying to speak. "What is it, old son?" asked Meadows, stooping to his lips.

A gleam of the old sardonic humor shone in Gregory's eyes. "Had my drink at any rate," he said, and died.

. . . . . .

Sick at heart with this happening, Tim was retracing his steps towards the summit of the ridge where his patrol awaited him, when he encountered an officer standing in the shelter of a bowlder, watching the new water tank being maneuvered into place in a recess previously dug for its reception. Further down the slope squatted an orderly, with that air of patient boredom peculiar to orderlies. "You want to look sharp with that," remarked the stranger.

Tim took him for a wandering engineer subaltern and felt all the resentment of a grandmother whose progeny has endeavored to instruct her in the matter of eggs. "I know that as well as you do," he replied rudely. "If you look down there you'll see two other tanks that were holed before they were off-loaded. And we've just had an

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officer killed over that very tank. We live here, thank you."

"Warm corner, is it?" He turned his face towards Tim, who discerned in the light of a descending flare a pair of penetrating eyes, above keen regular features and a gray mustache. The whole pose of the man was reminiscent of an alert fox-terrier.

"Warm corner is right," agreed Tim. "Ruddy death-trap. And no damn good to anybody either."

"How is that?" enquired the other.

"Well, look at it. Johnny Bulgar can see right into it. And if we left it to-night, he couldn't occupy it—not that he'd be such a damn fool as to want to—with us sitting up there on the ridge four hundred yards away."

"Hum!" remarked the stranger, as Tim pointed with his stick. "Why do we hold it then?"

"How should I know? Ask the ruddy Staff. If any of them ever came up here to see things for themselves, instead of playing polo all day at Corps Headquarters, I suppose we wouldn't. As it is, we— Duck!"

They flung themselves down. A traversing machine-gun filled the ravine with a jumping swarm of rock splinters. "It must be rather an exaggerated salient," remarked the stranger, brushing dust from his clothing.

"Salient! It's a damned island!"

"Which way is your company headquarters?" Tim pointed, and with an abrupt good night the other moved off, followed by his orderly.

Three hours and a half later, Tim, weary and scratched with barbed wire, and gulping with the indigestion which prolonged nervous repression of the breath produces, brought his patrol in from the burnt-out scrub of the Corne du Bois and came down into Jackson's Ravine again. He sent his men to their dugouts, and paused for a drink at the company headquarters, where Meadows, dozing in the corner with his tin hat over his eyes, waked at his coming. "I see there's a new sapper in these parts," observed Tim. "What's his name, d'you know?"

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"Dunno. Haven't met him."

"He said he was coming down here. He was watching the men fit that tank."

Meadows looked up. "What was he like?" he asked.

"Middle-aged sort of bird. I told him just exactly what I thought of this abode of love, and the ruddy Staff, and the war generally."

Meadows appeared to be much amused. "Didn't he tell you who he was?" he asked.

"Why, no. Who was he?"

"That," said Meadows sweetly, "was Uncle George. You'll probably be shot at dawn."

. . . . . .

Tim spent the next few days in a most uncomfortable state of mind, cursing his ill-luck. He had heard of this Commander-in-Chief, who, unlike other Commanders-in-Chief of the war, was reputed to know more about the front line than any single man in the force; he had heard, too, without placing much belief in it, of his trick of wandering about, unadorned and with a single orderly, like a military Haroun-al-Raschid. And now he came to think of it, he rather thought that he had seen that alert fox-terrier figure before—standing beside the road over Hill 420 one bitter winter's morning, when Tim had been driving the stragglers of the battalion over the sky-line, with oaths and badinage, before the dawn and the enemy guns should find them in the open. And on neither occasion had he so much as saluted!

Tim had all the infantry officer's lively fear of the Staff, that race of demi-gods living in regal pomp and luxury far away from the war, which could—and did—make it so unpleasant for the lower orders when their clan feelings and dignities were affronted. It was now years since the pre-war professional soldiers, as a body, had had anything to do with the actual fighting. After 1914 circumstances and their own natural inclination had combined to install them in a position very similar to that occupied by the caste from which they were sprung in civilian life, and

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they merely governed from afar. There were occasional eccentrics who remained fighting men, just as there are aristocratic cranks who become slum missionaries and parsons. For the rest they remained behind the lines, and their experience of the war was restricted to slumming expeditions, from which they returned properly horrified by the vileness that they had seen, but as untouched by the idea that it was incumbent upon them to participate as their fathers and brothers were by the notion of selling all that they had, and going to live in Shoreditch. It was not that these men lacked courage of a big-game-hunting sort, for they would have led—and most of them had led—troops against the foe, sword in hand, without a tremor; but to them the Great War was merely a heaven-sent incident in one's career, of which one naturally made as much as possible, maneuvering for kudos and advancement as a keen man should, and keeping things within one's own caste and the handling of these war-time levies was a squalid business, not *pukka* soldiering, and better left to the temporary shabby-genteels, who didn't even wear uniforms that fitted nine times out of ten. So they maintained a close corporation which the fighting-men of the war could not understand and were inclined to be rude about; and being contemptuously aware of this latter tendency—which they regarded as akin to Socialism, and very bad form indeed—the professionals repressed it with an arrogance which nobody dares to use nowadays to his inferiors in civil life.

It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that Tim should have been appalled by what he had done, and should have waited daily for the thunderbolt to fall—as it had fallen on Moreton of the Trench Mortars, after he had sworn at a beautiful colonel in red tabs who had walked along his parapet, and drawn fire to the tune of three casualties; as it had fallen on Major Shene of the eighteen-pounders, who had answered a dainty creature in polo boots, son and A.D.C. of a general, who had begun: "Father says—" with a sardonic: "Indeed! And what

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does mother say?" so that the first was harassed into transferring to the Machine Gun Corps, leaving the Stokes mortars, which were the joy of his heart, and the second had not been confirmed in his acting-majority.

But as time went on, and nothing happened but the long over-due abandonment of Jackson's Ravine, he realized that there are exceptions to every rule, and that an old engraving which he had seen of Wellington being cheered by the survivors of Waterloo was not, as he had come bitterly to suppose, a monstrous pictorial falsehood; but that such things as a general being cheered by his troops might be possible even to-day, if circumstances permitted—in one case at any rate.

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## CHAPTER XX

### *A SALONICA NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT*

SOME official personage was enabled to say in Parliament that the malaria percentage for the summer of 1917 showed a marked improvement on the previous year, and this was true enough, for the doctors now classified every case which was, as the Scots have it, not proven, as "Not yet diagnosed" or "Pyrexia, unknown origin," which made the figures look much better. Every one was sick, however, much as usual, and Tim took his turn at the bloated hospital establishments at the base, and had the shivers periodically thereafter. It was while he was convalescent from this initial attack that he had his first opportunity of fraternizing with his allies, and his lack of means of communication with Russians and Serbs—he could chatter well enough to French, Greeks, and Italians —stimulated his inborn taste for philology to the point of tackling the Russian language, an enterprise which the puzzling triple place-names of the Balkan maps had already led him to contemplate. He found it a difficult task enough; Russian, with its tuning-fork alphabet and wealth of words, is the most difficult tongue in the world to learn, with the exception, perhaps, of Japanese or Chinese.

This interest in Russian—which most of his companions regarded as a form of mental derangement—was the last flickering up of the expiring spirit of his earlier life, now fast vanishing in that metamorphosis which the characters of all the fighting men underwent, so that they returned home changed beings, and disquieted their friends and relations exceedingly. By this time not even the letters of the General, who wrote regularly, and of Uncle Max,



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his aunt and cousins, Admiral Gonzalez, and Mr. Macleod (now with a labor battalion in Egypt), who were occasional correspondents, could resuscitate the old schoolboy Tim, were it only for a moment. Even when a letter came to say that his cousin Fritz had been killed in the Carpathians, and shortly afterwards the news of his grandmother's death arrived, he was scarcely roused to feeling. Of course Fritz was killed; wasn't everybody getting killed? And the Señora was an old lady and couldn't live for ever. This double bereavement would have been a dreadful thing in Valparaiso, but it did not seem to make much difference amongst the gritty abominations of the lakeside sectors, where the summer grass fires exploded the cartridges in the pouches of the dead of the defeated April offensive, making the corpses pop all day like diabolical Chinese crackers. And then, in the November of 1917, an event occurred which killed the old Tim for good and all, so that for years after he believed himself incapable of any sentimental capacity whatsoever—a mere creature of physical needs, living only for the day.

. . . . . .

He leaned against the *parados* of the trench, listening to the faint patter of the rain which, as near as no matter to snow, struck softly on his steel helmet. On the firestep three sprawling privates, their faces and shoulders covered with waterproof sheets, shivered in an incredible soaked slumber. A fourth, the sentry, stood amongst them peering unceasingly into the dark. Tim stamped his feet in the sludge, for it was bitter cold.

It was very quiet in the trench, which followed the crest of a low ridge of softish shale. An occasional flare rose with a pop from the enemy line, four hundred yards away across a deep ravine of charnel mists, where the bleached bones of French colonials lay mingled with the later corpses of Devon, Worcester and Gloucester. Slightly to the right, and visible as a dim hump against the night sky, lay the Hill 60 of the Balkans, the Petit Couronné; from some concealed emplacement in this fortress a ma-

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chine-gun occasionally broke the drizzling hush with a wild furious chatter and whine.

Tim pulled aside his fur gauntlet and looked at his watch. He was doing duty with his old friends, A Company, during a dearth of officers. It was ten minutes to two, and at the hour his spell of trench duty ended. He moved along the trench; it would take him fully ten minutes to make his way down the nine fire-bays, inky dark and calf-deep in slime, which separated him from Company headquarters in the communication trench. A long stretch, quite half of those straggling bays, was empty; the scanty numbers of the company did not suffice properly to hold a line so close to the enemy. One night not long before visitors had sojourned briefly in those shadows, leaving the officer on trench duty and his orderly stabbed in a dozen places, to serve as *cartes de visite*.

Six times already that night Tim had fumbled and stumbled his way from one end of this ill-omened ditch to the other, his cocked revolver in his hand. He now set about the seventh journey, expecting as each star-light hoisted its momentary white glare into the trench to see the square helmet of an enemy. But once more there was nobody, and he slid his weapon back into its pouch as he came out into the friendly shelter of the communication trench, with its crouching silent sentry in the fire-bay in front. As he turned the corner, he almost ran into the back of a heavily built man, standing with his legs apart and his hands behind him, who was interviewing a nervy Tommy. He recognized the burly torso and poker face of Brigadier-General Cholmondeley Soames—Burnisher Soames, as he was known throughout an army which referred to his headquarters, not altogether disrespectfully, as the Sixpenny G.H.Q.

"Are y'happy?" asked the Burnisher, staring his victim out of countenance.

"Yis, sor," replied the soldier miserably, in a pronounced Liverpool whine.

"Merry'n' bright?"

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"Yis, sor."

"Free from lice?"

"Yis, sor."

"Huh!" said the Brigadier incredulously, staring more awfully than ever at the man's soul and underwear. "Then carry on!"

The private saluted convulsively, and departed with all speed. "G'd evenin', Staveley."

"Good evening, sir." Tim walked round him and saluted. To a favored few the Burnisher unbent slightly —a crack, as it were, in the mask of an Aztec war-god; and Tim was one of the few.

"Y'r Salonica leave's through," rumbled the General. "Three days!"

Tim's heart gave a bound. For as the hart desireth the water-springs, as the remittance man longs for London town, so did the members of the Salonica Force yearn for that dubious Nirvana. "Thank you, sir," he replied, and meant it. "Any one else from the battalion going, sir?"

"Carnforth," answered the big man. "Good company for yer, huh? Keep y' away from women. Steady feller, Carnforth."

Tim agreed. The subalterns generally looked upon the ex-petty officer R.N., who was known to them as Uncle, as a regular Methuselah; he must have been all of thirty-five.

"How's th' sector?"

"Quiet, sir. A few Tok Emmas about eleven."

"Not seen Foxy Fritz, eh?"

"No, sir."

"'R' you Foxy Fritz, by any chance?"

Tim knew from experience that the Burnisher was being jocular. Foxy Fritz was a German spy, very much in the public eye at that time, whose exploits were becoming legendary. Dressed as a sapper subaltern, he had visited every gun position of a division in the Struma Valley, and he had inspected the Base Ammunition Depot in the blue tabs of an ordnance captain, taking copious notes, under

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the guidance of a senior officer of that establishment. His outfit on both occasions had been perfect, complete even to a Dunhill pipe, and he had all the army slang at the tip of his tongue. Everybody admired him as a sportsman, but he was admittedly a great nuisance. "No, sir," said Tim.

"Not so sure. How many languages is it y' speak—thirteen?

"No, sir. Three fluently—and about eight or nine in bits and scraps."

"Devil y'do! Well, Foxy Fritz must be somethin' after your style. G' night, Staveley!"

. . . . . .

The fact that the heart of Salonica town had recently been destroyed by one of the most voracious fires in history, and that it lay at the end of an all-night railway journey in a wooden-seated carriage, might have been expected to damp the enthusiasm of any reveler who intended to spend a holiday in that resort. It had no such effect, however, on Carnforth and Tim, as they tramped the last five miles of their journey along the muddy road from Dudular in the gray of dawn. There was not a bed to be had in the whole place, for all the hotels except one had been burnt out; but, quite undismayed by a little thing like this, they preëmpted space on the dining table of the sole survivor. "After all," said Carnforth, "we're only here for three days."

They started the first of them with ham and omelettes and coffee at Floca's, the big *café* on the Place de la Liberté, and after that they sat upon the *terrasse,* with cigarettes aglow and two bootblacks apiece laboring over their field boots, in rich proprietorship of the world. Then followed a luxurious bath at the Bains de Santé Boton—the Healthy Boton Baths, as the placard in six languages at the door announced for the benefit of the Briton—where you got a piece of green soap, a thick towel, a thin towel, and a sheet, all for two *drachmas,* and the bath was

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set in the floor in an imperial Roman fashion, so that you went down steps into it.

Next, feeling much refreshed and oddly thinner, came meditatory drinks, and then lunch at the Cercle Militaire, the great club-restaurant run by the French army. So great was the popularity of this resort that the service was in two fixed sittings, and they waited for the doors to open in a packed throng of officers of all nations from Dutch to Japanese. The charm of the Cercle Militaire was the perpetual novelty of its encounters, for there was no ceremony; one sat down where one could, next to a Greek midshipman or a French general of division (who was usually much the less punctilious of the two) making conversation in the *lingua franca* of the Balkan armies. Here Tim's accomplishments came in very usefully, for he and Carnforth were at a table with two Russians, a Greek colonel, and a French artillery officer, with all of whom Tim could talk after a fashion—his Russian was progressing, and his knowledge of the classics assisted him with the modern Greek of the colonel—much to their and Carnforth's admiration.

Lunch lasted until so late, and tea, at a crowded shop where there were even Englishwomen to be seen, so long, and their digestions were so good, that they spent almost the whole of that first day eating and drinking. They dined lazily and sensuously at the White Tower Restaurant, reveling in the white tablecloth and the orchestra as only men can who have not seen such things for months. At about half-past nine the multi-colored uniforms in the big dining-room began to leave, with a prodigious rattling of studded boots on the hardwood floor. The night life of Salonica was beginning.

"Where to?" said Tim, buttoning his British warm in pale moonlight at the White Tower gates. "The Skating Rink?" Carnforth nodded, and they set off side by side across the ancient cobbles.

A Klondike bar of the 'nineties was a drab and colorless

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place compared with a Salonica *cabaret* in 1917, and yet it is the only analogy that can be made which even faintly conveys the flavor of the thing. In the Skating Rink—the old skating floor was covered with a sea of little tables—were officers of half the armies in Europe, drinking, shouting, and fraternizing under a thick pall of tobacco smoke, far from home and utterly reckless of the morrow. At one end of the place was a platform, fortified with notices to the effect that it was absolutely defended to mount upon the scene. On this a variety entertainment was in progress, apparently in dumb show, for the din completely drowned it. Frenchmen, in long-haired coats like woolly hearthrugs, whacked the tables with their canes, shouting in unison: *"Un, deux, trois!"* A party of Britishers, beating time with their mugs, kept up a solemn chant of "W. D. & H. O. Wills! W. D. & H. O. Wills!" in default of the patriotic catch phrases of their allies. The band conductor, a little bald-headed old man, had been lassoed by a subaltern with the blue hat-band of the Lothian and Border Horse; a lieutenant of Alpini, standing on a table cane in hand, fenced furiously with a Serbian; strangers rose occasionally and waltzed with one another, overturning drinks and tables; the entrance sucked in a perpetual spate of roisterers, who one and all, for such was the convention, climbed over the turnstile without paying.

There was an angel in this Eden, however—the Assistant Provost Marshal; and he barred them out with a flaming sword at half past eleven. "It's a damn scandal, turning us adrift like this," observed Carnforth. "No wonder we pure young boys go astray. It's scarcely sunset yet—let's go and have a look at Number Thirty-two."

The door of Number Thirty-two was of sheet iron, set in a high glass-topped wall. A French officer, flourishing one of his leggings in the air like a flag, was hammering on the metal with his cane and demanding admittance in angry tones as they approached. *"Moi, je suis un habitué, je te dis!"* he shouted. *"Ouvres donc, saligaud!"* But the

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unseen custodian was obdurate; evidently the deportment of this caller did not commend itself to him. It was not until Tim and Carnforth had forcibly removed their ally, and had been inspected through a grille, that they themselves were allowed to enter; whereupon the Frenchman, who had stealthily returned, successfully rushed the portal at their heels, and joined them in the garden with vinous whoops of triumph.

As they went up the path he took their arms in his, evidently quite unembittered by their recent tussle, and smiled upon them sweetly. Then he said surprisingly: "Do you speak English?"

They were wearing the uniform of that nation, so that this seemed to need little reply; and in fact, it was merely a *tour de force* on the Frenchman's part, for he went on immediately, without waiting for one: "I spik English ver' well. I like ver' much spik English wiz you, but I am drunk. When I am sober I am interesting, but now I am drunk—very drunk. Dr-r-r-r-unk!"

"Those in favor, say aye. Those against, say no," said Carnforth. "Those for? Those against? The ayes have it. Carried unanimously!"

Number Thirty-two was a two-storied modern villa; all the windows were brightly lit, and the door stood open. In the square hall an elderly major of the Army Service Corps was chasing a young lady, whose only garment was an abbreviated silk night-dress, round and round the table. However, the newcomers took no notice of this idyll, and passed on into the house.

The whine of a fiddle and loud yells of applause resounded from what would have been in an ordinary house the drawing-room, and they squeezed in through the door. The room was packed to suffocation with officers of all nations; a burly Russian colonel and a second lieutenant of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had exchanged headgear, were sitting on the mantelpiece, displaying lengths of supple leather boots and bare pink legs. The company was shouting wild encouragement to a

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shapely young woman who was performing the *danse du ventre,* quite naked, in the middle of the floor, to the music of a violin played by a gray-haired old man. A fat woman was staggering in and out with tray-loads of glasses; acting as master of the ceremonies was a gigantic negro, who was keeping the ring under difficulties.

"Regular lower-deck fug!" observed Carnforth, yelling into Tim's ear. "Let's get round to the window."

Little by little they edged round the room. Before the window stood a settee, on which three tipsy Frenchmen nodded drunkenly. Carnforth and Tim pulled this forward by main force, and inserted themselves behind it; the former reached up to the window fastenings, and then looked down. "Hullo, look who's here!" he ejaculated.

Behind the settee, where he had evidently slipped when his potations overcame him, was a friend, one Manners of the Salchesters.

The shriek of the fiddle suddenly stopped. The old fiddler rubbed his fatigued fingers, and gratefully accepted a glass of champagne; the *danseuse* slipped quickly through a door with the first of a group of clamorous suitors. The released audience expanded into the center of the room, and a high vociferous clatter of ribald shouts and laughter began. The French officer, still waving his legging, thundered on the door which had closed behind the *danseuse.* *"Lolotte, dépêches toi!"* he cried. *"Je t'attends! Nom de dieu de nom de dieu! Qu'est ce qu'elle a, la poule? Déjà dix minutes, au moins! Lolotte!"*

"Let's clear out," said Tim, after watching the scene for a few minutes. "We aren't tight enough yet for this."

"What about this ass?" remarked Carnforth. "We can't leave him here." He stirred the recumbent Manners with his toe.

"Better get him out of it," replied Tim. They dragged the unfortunate by the arms through the crowd in the passage, along the garden path, and past the iron gate. The cool air revived him somewhat, and he suddenly re-

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marked: "Shall we go to Bagdad in dad's bags? Damn good!" and burst into cackles of bibulous mirth.

Once away from the door of Number Thirty-two they propped their charge against the railings. "Are you all right, Manners?" asked Tim. The happy warrior replied by turning a glazing eye on his companions, and sliding to the pavement, where he at once fell into a deep sleep. "I can't tow this brute any further," remarked Carnforth, mopping a heated brow, "or I shall muster my bag. Too much dinner."

Tim looked around. In the courtyard of the Cercle Militaire, close beside them, there reclined upon its side an urn, disinterred in digging some trench system—a huge thing, used no doubt in ancient times for storing grain. He silently indicated this to Carnforth; taking Manners by the head and heels they bundled him into it like a sack of potatoes. Carnforth leaned inside, and fastened the great coat of the slumberer carefully around him. "Snug as a dry dock," he remarked. "Fortunate it's a decent night."

. . . . . .

At about two in the morning Tim found himself—with a beer mug in each side pocket, collected from some house of call or other—in the street outside the White Tower Restaurant, acting as liaison officer to a representative allied contingent, which consisted of Carnforth, their old friend, the Frenchman (who had mislaid his legging entirely by this time), a Serbian colonel, an Italian naval officer, two huge Cossacks, a youth in the maternity jacket of the Royal Flying Corps, and a tall bald captain of the Welsh Regiment. All were proclaiming in their respective languages their need for supper; they had been raising Cain for several hours, and it had been exhausting work.

For some time they made thunderous attempts to rouse the dormant White Tower Restaurant, but as this was entirely devoid of its staff, which had gone home several

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hours before, they not unnaturally received no response. At length they desisted from their efforts, and they were standing in the gutter, noisily debating their next move, when a belated *droschki* hove in sight. On this they bore down with many war-cries.

The passenger, a nervous-looking civilian, took one eyeful of them and fled in terror. They got aboard, all of them, with hoots of triumph, and called upon the driver to take them to some place where they could obtain supper, in five or six languages. Of these he selected Tim's Spanish, replying in the same, which was his own tongue; for he was a Salonica Jew, and all the Jews of that colony are descendants of the exiles who were driven out of Spain in the fifteenth century. And what is four hundred years to a Jew?

The *droschki,* at a foot-pace and with bending axle, went groaningly down the long Boulevard Reine Olga, past the famous notice-board which read: "Stokers! Slacken please!" towards the distant suburb of Kanamaria. At length it stopped before a pair of iron gates at the end of a long avenue of laurels. *"Le Roi Georges!"* said the driver.

They paid him lavishly, and proceeded down the drive towards a lighted building. In the King George, an all-night restaurant run by a Greek from Birkenhead, a small-hour atmosphere of exhausted tranquillity reigned. A circle of officers, mostly British, were lounging round a cheery open fireplace. A few parties were eating supper; in a far corner a group of British subalterns were listening to the amusing broken English of a tipsy French captain, whose blue-white face exactly resembled that of the third-rate actor of fiction. For a moment Tim thought that he knew the tall, fair-haired captain of the Royal Scots, seated with his back towards them, who seemed to be the leading spirit of this cheerful little band. The turn of his head and the set of his shoulders seemed to be familiar, as did his slight, rather musical, Scots inflection; Tim thought idly, as he sat down to supper, that he must

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have met him on some course of instruction or other, though he could not recall which.

The waiter was hard put to it to give prompt service to such a large party, and after handing round a sort of *hors d'oeuvre* he vanished into the kitchen, apparently for ever. After an impatient interval Tim followed, and found the man cutting up a number of cold chickens, three of which he impounded, in spite of protests, and tore limb from limb at the table, distributing the *disjecta membra* to his starving following by hand. He then returned to the kitchen, and was coming out with a couple of bottles of that raisiny Greek wine called Mavrodaphne, when he almost stepped upon the heels of the Royal Scots captain. The latter was talking in a low voice to one of the waiters, still with his back to Tim, who was almost sure that he was speaking Judaeo-Espanol, the Salonica Jew-Spanish *patois*. He left the waiter just as Tim came up, and crossed the room to rejoin his party.

Tim's fleeting interest in the Royal Scot was once more aroused; Judaeo-Espanol is not a common accomplishment, and the back view of the speaker seemed increasingly and oddly familiar. Tim followed him across the room to try and identify the place of their previous meeting, if there had been one, and in any case to fraternize with a fellow philologist. As Tim, with the bottles still in his hands, came up beside him, he turned his head and glanced up, and they looked each other full in the eyes.

"*Allmächtiger Gott!*" cried Tim, the English all shaken out of him. The captain of the Royal Scots was Kurt.

"Thank you!" said the tipsy Frenchman, without a trace of French accent or of drunkenness, producing from somewhere a heavy automatic pistol. "That settles it! I thought I was right. This is Foxy Fritz. Keep quite still, Fritz, and you too, Mr. Man, whoever you are. I suppose you can't be another spy, or you wouldn't have given yourself away in that silly fashion. Stand away from behind, please. This gun will penetrate several people if it goes off."

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Tim heard, as if in a dream, the ejaculations of surprise and scraping of chairs behind him. Dully he became aware of the bottles of wine in his hands, and put them on the table. Carnforth came to his elbow. Kurt looked at the threatening muzzle before him, and made no move; he smiled up at Tim as if they had been in the sunlit garden of their youth, and wrung his very heart.

Tim could never recall the next few moments; his brain was obscured by the surcharge of blood which hammered behind his bursting temples. His next clear memory was of the motor-car in which he sat beside the silent Kurt, with the bogus Frenchman and a bewildered subaltern, impressed as escort, on the seat opposite, as they sped through the darkened streets on their way to the Intelligence Department of G.H.Q.

That was how Tim encompassed the destruction of his cousin, Kurt Axel Hardt von Schulenberg.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### *THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM*

ON a blistering day in the late May of 1918, Captains Carnforth and Meadows of the Royal West Pennines rode at a walk along the white ribbon of road which lay behind the divisional area, switching the horseflies from their mounts with their long horsehair swatters, the perspiration dripping from the rearward sweep of their sun-helmets with the unhurried regularity of a leaking tap. "Lucky devils," said Captain Meadows somberly to Captain Carnforth.

The latter nodded. "The whole battalion was as bucked as blazes," he observed.

"No wonder. Do you realize that they'll be in France in another fortnight? Damned if I see why *they*—" The two officers relapsed into silence, filled with a hopeless envy.

They had ridden across to say farewell to the Chicesters, who, to their own incredulous delight and the rage and indignation of the other battalions of the brigade, were going to France under the arrangement which was bleeding the scanty ranks of the Salonica Force to bolster up the French front after the strain of the preceding great German offensive.

"You know," said Meadows at length, "I once read a story of Kipling's about the Roman Wall, and the way they took off the legions one by one, and left the garrison to it. This reminds me of it in a way. I suppose we shall soon be rigging up dummy camps again, and getting mules to drag branches along the roads to stir up the dust, like we did last summer when we were so short of men. Now we're worse than ever. The line's just a row of sentries —with no guard to turn out."



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"We seem to take in Johnny Bulgar all right."

"Up to now. . . . But this year, if Mackensen comes down from Rumania—of course, we've a lot of wire up. We'd give them a devil of a time. But one thing's certain—they'll have to do something about us before 1919. The men are absolutely all in."

"I expect the Greeks will take off the pressure before then," said Carnforth. "They say they've got four divisions getting ready."

"Well, I hope they hurry up about it. All our chaps are down to skin and bone. Look at young Staveley, for instance; when he joined us at Ardzan two years ago he was as cheery a chap as you could find—keen, you know—always sketching and poking about looking at things. Now he's as thin as a lath and as bitter as blazes, and does nothing but mope about. It isn't decent for a chap of his age to be in that state." He might have added that he drank as much whisky as a seasoned toper of forty; but this was too common a circumstance to mention.

Carnforth had his own private knowledge to help him understand Tim's behavior. Nobody in the battalion except himself knew of Tim's private tragedy; Tim had never revealed it to any one, and Carnforth had fixed opinions, the outcome of much experience, about minding one's own affairs. "It's a pity he can't get a spot of leave," he remarked, thinking of the stricken face of Tim when he returned from a last interview—G.H.Q. had been decent over that—with that extraordinary German spy cousin of his who had been shot.

"Well, he ought to do that pretty soon," said Meadows. "They seem to be speeding it up tremendously, now that Uncle George has tumbled to the way these Staff and Base *wallahs* were wangling it. They say he went on board one of the leave boats and found two Staff pups having their third go, and bunged them ashore again. Yes, it's a fact. Well, I've had my turn." He sighed. "But I shouldn't wonder if I didn't get home again

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towards the end of next year or the spring of 1920, now that they're doing it in strict rotation. . . ."

. . . . . .

Tim got his leave in June, and left the shell fire—which had now, with the local experience of years, become a fine art—and the man-famine of the Doiran front with a faint incredulity that such a thing could be possible. Doiran had begun to assume in his mind the characteristics of eternal damnation, for the Pennines had now been in the line there, without intermission, for eighteen months.

He traveled down to old Greece, through the Vale of Tempe under the bulk of Olympus, with its green-flowing river tranquil and beautiful to-day as when the ancient poets sang of it a couple of thousand years ago; across the corn lands of Thessaly, and over Mount Parnassus in a motor lorry on the new military road, and so down to the shores of the Gulf of Corinth, from which the heel of Italy was but a day's run. At Taranto they were put into a battered military train, which, after eight days of dawdling along iron byways, dropped them at Cherbourg, with England only just over the way. Within a fortnight of starting from the dugouts of the line, Tim was coming out of Waterloo Station into the London of 1918, one of a crowd of men who stared around as if they were seeing ghosts. Not one had been in England for a couple of years at least; the Tommies, to whom Salonica was not so accessible as to the officers, had not so much as sat down to eat a meal from a table, nor had been into a shop, in three years.

In Macedonia Tim had been dully despairing; as Meadows had said, he had not cared whether he lived or died. It was not that the matter of his marriage, or the affair of Kurt, or the rigors of the campaign, would any of them, taken apart, have conquered his courage. But the depression of incessant attacks of fever, which had racked him ever since his first infection in the preceding summer, had broken his resistance to a brooding melancholy which magnified his own personal disasters into

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monstrous tragedies. Life seemed shattered to pieces, and the dull hopeless monotony of Macedonia never-ending.

On the leave-party, however, a revulsion of feeling set in. It was impossible to be downcast amongst that hilarious crowd of fever-ridden revelers, who had been given by the gods a blessed three weeks of reprieve; not that Tim needed an example, for he felt as recklessly gay as the rest. Once again he had something to live for—three weeks of good living, hot baths, soft beds, theaters, all that could be bought for money.

When one of the few surviving taxis had been secured, and the driver asked for his direction, Tim thought a moment, looked down, and then, with the air of a man making up his mind, gave the address of that tiny flat in which his wife, for the past two years, had been gratifying her ambition for the life of the metropolis. He realized well enough that, aware as he was of her infidelities of the past, and of the extreme probability of others in the present and future, he was lowering himself to the level of the *mari complaisant* in taking this course, a thing that would have revolted the old Tim beyond expression. But, damn it, what was the use of worrying? He wanted his three weeks; they were all that life would give him, in all probability, and he had nowhere at all to go to; the comfort of female companionship was a vitally necessary part of them. Maudie was no blushing bride, he mused bitterly, with a sardonic grin at the innocent he had once been; but she was pretty, she was amusing, and she would serve his needs, for these three weeks, better than any other feminine companion whom he could obtain at such short notice. And what did anything matter?

He let himself into the flat with the latchkey that he had carried in his hip pocket ever since going overseas, after a brief two days of bliss in these very quarters. It seemed incredible to see the place so exactly the same, when he himself felt such a different being. The boy that he remembered in the little sitting-room might have been another person—looked another person too, he realized, as

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he saw himself in the mirror. He who had gone had been an open-faced handsome youth in a dapper uniform, this was a gaunt and hollow-cheeked man, with hair receding from the temples and thinning on the top of the head from the pressure of steel helmets, wrinkled round the eyes with much staring through hot sun and cold wind, in high leather boots, and a stained patched uniform with two blue chevrons on the sleeve, the Military Cross ribbon on the breast, and a sun-helmet hanging from one shoulder.

Maudie had been out at a supper-party on the previous night, and she was still asleep. She awoke to find this fierce-looking apparition hanging over the bed-rail, and sat up with a little cry, drawing filmy wisps of silk about her shapely body; then recognition and surprise dawned in her eyes. She had not changed in the least; her mop of fair hair and blue eyes were as attractive as ever, and her white arms and shoulders as fragile and delicate. The last fragment of Tim's scruples vanished for ever before the daintiness, the ineffable un-trenchiness of her.

"Don't bother to scream," he remarked cynically. "It's all perfectly respectable; I'm your husband, you know. I've got three weeks' leave, and we're going to spend it together. If you've got any inconvenient engagements, you'd better get out of them. Do it by telephone, while I have a bath, will you?"

So Tim had his three weeks, and strove to forget Macedonia with fair success in the whirl of that war-time London, which, though meat was short and people sweetened their coffee with little pellets out of bottles, and air raids took place occasionally, was hectically gay with women dressed up as colonels and admirals and stage farmhands, all hugely enjoying the war (or so it seemed to Tim), and profiteers, slackers in red tabs, and young men with haunted eyes, like himself, trying to forget things, and their little lady friends in their regimental-crested underwear from that quintessential product of the times, the prodigiously flourishing emporium of Madame Venn. Tim was introduced to *thé dansant* society—that glossy

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sleek crowd which only exists in London, and in which nobody is anybody, however smart they may appear and whoever they may talk about; in which, in fact, most people are like cinema scenery, all *façade* that must not be explored. He spent money like water, and found Maudie a satisfactory companion, the more so since she had no need to pretend and could give rein to a natural *diablerie;* only once did either of them allude to the past, and that was on the last night before he was due to return.

Maudie looked up from his shoulder in a taxi, as they returned home from a night-club. "And have you quite forgiven me for pretending so much when we first met?" she asked, with mock humility.

Tim laughed. "My dear girl," he replied, "have you never heard the phrase: 'For three years or the duration of the war'?"

. . . . . .

With this interlude already like a half-forgotten dream, Tim rejoined the battalion early in September. He had turned into the office of the Railway Transport Officer at Dudular with the casualness of long habit; but that functionary, instead of nodding absently as usual, looked at his badges and said: "Pennines? You get out at Salomanli."

"Salomanli? Cugunci, you mean. Salomanli's miles behind the line."

"Well, Salomanli it is. All your brigade's out there."

"Wonders never cease," said Tim.

He found the battalion in an arid and treeless valley in the stony waterless hills, near the ruins of an ancient castle called Avret Hissar. "What ho!" called Clavering, as Tim strolled into the officers' lines. He was sitting, stark naked except for a sun-helmet, outside his tent in a hole in the ground lined with a waterproof sheet, which was serving as a wallow. "Look who's blown in! Just in time to be killed!"

"What's all this?" enquired Tim. "Why are we out here? It must be out of shell range."

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"Between you and me and Uncle George," said Clavering darkly, regarding Tim with one sinister eye, "we're going to attack the Pip Ridge."

"Get out! We haven't enough men to hold the line as it is."

"Oh, yes, we have," retorted Clavering, sluicing water over his back. "Johnny Greek. He's come on amazingly. The Cretan Division's taken over from Horseshoe Hill to the Lake. You should have seen 'em! They came up on ponies, bless you, sitting side-saddle, and set 'em to graze all over the trenches. The old Bulgar had the time of his life with his machine-guns next morning. But it didn't take 'em long to get into it, and there they are; they crawl out at night, and breathe defiance and onions through the wire."

Tim left Clavering to finish his bath, and went into the mess-tent of A Company, where Meadows and Saunders were studying a set of aeroplane photographs. "You can't see much," said Saunders, who was seated with his back to the entrance, "but what you can see is bloody."

"Hello, here's Staveley," said Meadows, with his charming smile. "Good man! Stands England where it did?"

Tim sat down on an empty box at the makeshift table, and helped himself to a tepid whisky-and-water. "More or less," he replied. "Very brave over air raids—when there isn't one on. Inclined to patronize people from the front about it."

"London the same as ever?" asked Saunders wistfully.

"More or less. Stiff with Yanks nowadays. They say they'll have three million of 'em next year. All the south of France is full of camps."

"Not likely to be any next year, as far as we're concerned," observed Saunders, grinning as if it were the best joke in the world. "As old M'Fee remarks: 'Moriarty te saluto.' We're for it."

"Yes, what is this rumor?" asked Tim. "Clavering says we're going to attack the Pips."

Meadows blew tobacco smoke thoughtfully into a wire

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fly-cage, to the intense agitation of its tenants. "That's right," he replied. "I understand it's to be win or nothing —the whole army over the top, French, Greeks, Serbs and every one. No reserves or anything."

"But if the thing goes wrong, how can we hold the line?"

"We can't. That's just the point. We couldn't hold it now if we were attacked, and things get worse every day. We've got a little *bukshee* at the moment with these new Greek troops, but that'll be gone when the Serbs drop out, and they're getting fewer all the time. So we're putting our shirt on a rank outsider for a win."

Tim felt for a moment a recrudescence of the old glow; but it was faint, and faded almost immediately. There was no such thing as a victory in these times, and this would be just another inconclusive massacre. He tried to imagine a successful forcing of the Doiran lines, and for the life of him could not compass it. "It'll be a devil of a job," he remarked.

Meadows turned again to the table. "And we've got the worst bit as usual," he said. "These are some special photos."

"Well," remarked Saunders, "as I was saying, if any man, even a Staff-*wallah,* can look at that and still maintain that we can go from Jackson's Ravine to the first Bulgar trench, up that hill, with full packs and extra ammunition, in four minutes, he must be damn well balmy."

"If any Staff-*wallah* did look at it he wouldn't know what it was," said Meadows. "But I believe the C.O.'s raised that point, and Cholmondeley's taking it up with Division."

"Oh, is he? I hope he'll manage to make them take notice. Whichever way you look at it, it'll be bad enough without any fundamental errors.

Meadows turned in his seat, and gazed pensively through the tent-flies at the dun-colored landscape outside, striped and streaked in black by the summer grass-fires, and

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jumping with refracted heat. "One thing about it," he observed, and something like satisfaction showed in his worn young face, "it'll mean the end of all this. Look! This time last year we were there." His finger stabbed the distant sky-line. "And the year before we were there." He pointed again. "Well, next August we won't be sickened by the sight of the place we were at last year and the year before, and so on. It may be Philippopolis, or it may be Kingdom Come; but, thank God, it won't be here."

Saunders nodded. "This time it's Fineesh Johnny," he agreed, in the *argot* of the camps.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### *THE RED DIEZ-Y-OCHO*

IT was the eighteenth of September; in a few hours, half a world away, happy people would be packing *empanadas* and corking the round-bellied *damajuanas* of good red wine, in preparation for the *fiesta.* As the memory of it all came to him, infinitely clear, bright, and detailed, Tim felt that recurrent unanswerable question, that: "What am I doing *here?*" which all men felt in the more nightmarish moments of the war years.

He lay out upon a precipitous hillside, under the light of a waning moon. It was very quiet; the guns, active throughout the night, were now dumb. On either side of him, in a silence only broken by their heavy breathing, the men of the battalion lay prone along a series of tape lines, laid to mark the jumping off place for the attack. The first paleness of dawn was gleaming in the east. Later on it would be hot; even now the crickets were beginning their tireless song in the bushes. Down below, amongst the time-worn wreckage of the old position in Jackson's Ravine, the Wessex Light Infantry, who were to follow the Pennines in the attack, were waiting to advance. Up the hill Tim could see the indistinct humped shapes of the Salchesters, who were to lead. There was a distant croaking of frogs from the valley below.

So far the brigade had been fortunate; they had passed out through the front line wire into No-Man's-Land, and had reached their first position undetected, thanks to the darkness and the sound of the guns. A few trench mortar shells had come over, bursting harmlessly in the bottom of the ravine—the regulation number, fired evidently without suspicion. "No end of luck so far," said Tim to himself. "If only it holds. . . ."



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The Pip Ridge, seen from a distance against the sky, resembled a petrified prehistoric monster, one of those creatures with a sort of hackle of armor plates along its spine, enormously enlarged. From end to end it was some five miles long, and the points of the hackles were the five Pips, conical hillocks on the great parent ridge. The first four Pips, working from the tail of the monster, were in enemy hands; Pip Five was British, as were the head and neck behind it. To the right of the ridge as Tim lay, he could see the conical summit of an isolated mountain; in front of this, and indistinct in the twilight of dawn, came the tangle of foothills, cut and traversed by a maze of trenches and barbed wire, which were to be the objectives of the Welsh Brigade and the Greeks.

From far behind there broke out suddenly the sullen booming of the heavy guns; the shells hummed high overhead, with an unfamiliar *timbre*. Tim nodded understanding; for the first time on the Balkan front, the British artillery was using gas shells. Tim looked at the luminous dial of his watch; it wanted five minutes to the zero hour, and as he looked the eighteen-pounders opened a blaze of shrapnel on the position which they were to attack first. The minute hand moved inexorably on; the dim shapes of the Salchesters gathered themselves to rise. "Time!" cried somebody, and the Pennines were on their feet, laboring up the hill.

One minute passed, and the laden men panted and swore; the hill was steeper than even they had anticipated. Two minutes. Three minutes. "Quicker!" cried the voice of the Salchesters' colonel, echoing down the hillside. "Double up!" The men increased the frantic scramble; Tim's lungs seemed about to burst, and a red mist gathered before his eyes. The men beside him were breathing in choking gasps, like wind-sucking horses. Four minutes! The British *barrage* stopped abruptly. Tim was appalled; the Salchesters should have been in the first enemy position by now. But they were late—they were late! Five minutes! A minute behind the time-table and

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Tim began to see the ragged outlines of the broken knife-crests against the sky-line above. Six minutes! The British shrapnel broke out again, dancing far ahead. Tim heard a few confused shouts as the Salchesters bore down and blotted out the little garrison of the Bulgar advanced work. Then the Pennines poured over the lip of the crest, into the pale light of day.

Salchesters and Pennines together, utterly exhausted, flung themselves into the shell holes and blasted earth of the captured position. Tim found himself and his headquarters details mixed up with the rear of A Company. Saunders, white in the face, was vomiting. Tim's eyes seemed bursting out of his head, and he tore frantic gulps of air through a raw throat. "Fatal—carry packs!" gasped Saunders, stifling a violent retch. "That blasted time-table! We've lost the *barrage*. Carry on! Get on, you blighthawks. There'll be hell in a minute!"

For a moment there was comparative quiet in the tumbled redoubt; the Bulgars in the second position were still in doubt as to the fate of the annihiliated garrison. But they soon grasped the situation; a heavy trench mortar shell whirred ponderously down and burst with a splitting detonation amongst the recumbent men; then another and another. The officers drove their gasping command through the smoke of the bursts, and for the first time British eyes beheld the top of the Pip Ridge, round the flanks of which they had skirmished for so long.

Tim's heart jumped into his mouth; he realized at once that the affair was going to be murderous. They had lost the *barrage* and that was bad enough, but what he now saw spelled inevitable disaster. No map, no aeroplane photograph, could have given any idea of the desperate strength of the place; he himself, who had spent the best part of two years staring at it through telescopes, had had no idea. The crest of the ridge, now black with the advancing Salchesters, was not an easy saddleback a couple of hundred yards wide, as it appeared in the flattened aeroplane photographs, but a razor-edge, a mere

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causeway above precipitous slopes which seemed to swoop to infinite depths on either hand. Three hundred yards ahead it widened abruptly, and there a massive redoubt, crowning the summit of Pip Four, barred it four-square, extending to the left on a great isolated shoulder of the mountain, which was separated from the advancing British by a gulf of empty air. The protective *barrage* which should have been beating on this fortalice, was a quarter of a mile away, flickering in useless white puffs over Pip Three. "I said that blasted time-table was all wrong!" thought Tim bitterly, as the Pennines stumbled along on the heels of the Salchesters. All formation had been lost; the narrowness of the footing had destroyed the carefully rehearsed battle order, and like a cup-tie crowd the attackers herded towards the slowly sinking cloud of dust which covered the next objective. For perhaps a minute nothing opposed them but a desultory rifle fire, and the splinters from the bursting trench mortar bombs behind, which Tim scarcely noticed.

Then, as the approaching men became clearly visible to the enemy, there began a fierce tapping of machine-guns from all along their front, especially from that flanking mountain buttress, and Tim saw the packed ranks of the jostling Salchesters suddenly check, thin out, and fall headlong, just as bottles might fall before a hosepipe. In a few seconds he found himself advancing alone; the pushing throng of a few moments before were dropping to earth in half-dozens. He stopped in momentary bewilderment. Then his training reasserted itself. Good God, the attack was falling to pieces! He pressed on impatiently, crying: "Come on, Pennines!" But no voice could be heard in such a racket, of course.

The memory of the next few minutes was a jumble in his mind afterwards. Some things remained with him in complete clearness—for instance, Captain M'Fee, the Ulsterman, lying on his chest over a shell crater, with his bullet head dropping and blood pouring from his mouth; the doctor, unconscious beside a wounded man, with

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bandages still in his hands and a severed artery in his thigh pumping his life away; Tucker, the adjutant, looking round in his careful deliberate way, and saying: "I wonder if we can get round here," and leading two or three men over the edge of the steep slope clean out of human knowledge, for not even their bodies were ever seen again. The rest was just a blur of indefinite length, in which he stumbled over heaped bodies, kicked men to their feet, kicked other things that were no longer men, and saw each party, as it got on its legs, blasted out of existence by the devilish spate of bullets. He saw a Lewis gun lying on the ground with its hinged backsight up, and stopped to put it carefully down again, with the ground kicking and jumping round him. "Have that knocked off in a moment," he said to nobody, and then, becoming aware of the absurdity of this, laughed hysterically.

The trench mortars pounded on relentlessly; but they raised a thick haze, which drifted across the hill and provided a little cover. Tim thanked God for this partial respite in a husky whisper. He noticed almost subconsciously that there was no gun-fire; at least the British artillery had seen to that, and the Bulgar gunners were choking and gasping in unaccustomed gas masks. A figure blundered into him in the haze; it was the colonel, bleeding copiously from a nearly severed wrist, which he was holding tightly in the other hand. "Good God, Staveley, what's holding the advance?" he cried. "What's become of the Salchesters?"

"Blotted out, sir, I fancy. Massed machine-guns on the flank."

"Get together what men you can, and come on," said the colonel, pressing on without waiting for a reply. Tim never saw him again.

Taking advantage of a slackening in the furious fire, as the Bulgars eased their hot weapons and changed belts, Tim and a subaltern of the Salchesters got together about thirty men and tried to lead them forward, as the surviv-

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ing officers had tried unavailingly to do time after time. The little party vanished like snow before steam, but the rush carried them up to the wire before the redoubt. The entanglements were quite unbroken at this point, a huge hedge many yards across; Tim—the Salchester subaltern had vanished—and half a dozen men were brought up short, and after a few seconds of naked indecision took what cover they might. Tim plunged into a large shell crater at the very edge of the wire; in this he found a private of the Salchesters, shot through the groin and *in extremis,* and Saunders, minus his steel helmet, his usually cheerful face gray and drawn, and with his tunic and shorts ripped to tatters. Tim discovered with surprise that his own garments were also in rags. "Get down quick," commanded Saunders. "Got any men?"

"I've got some. About half a dozen."

"I seem to be alone," said Saunders. "I tried about half a dozen times, but they simply vanished into thin air. The question is, what are we to do next?"

The firing was dying down, and the dust clearing from the ridge with its packed recumbent bodies. The blunt muzzle of a machine-gun protruded from an emplacement on the other side of the wire, not twenty feet from their lurking place, but fortunately they were at a lower level and out of its lateral sweep. From the center of the Bulgarian position a dense black column of smoke, shot with lurid flame, ascended into the air. *"Flammenwerfer,"* explained Saunders, following Tim's glance. "We got right through the wire, and shied a bomb into it. But we had to leg it out again, those that were left."

The shell hole was on the right of the crest, and Tim, his vision clearing as his throbbing heart quieted, could see an unfamiliar vista of the Bulgarian second line, far below, with Lake Doiran a great oval of perfect blue in the morning sun beyond. Puffs of smoke from bursting bombs, and little running figures, marked the advance of the Welshmen and Greeks. "Those poor blighters are

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going to catch it by and by, when the Bulgars up here have time to attend to 'em," he remarked to Saunders. "Where's Meadows?"

"God knows!" replied Saunders. "Seen nothing of him, nor young Parsons, nor Trevor, since those machine-guns started. Clavering was shot through the head—done for, I'm afraid."

The dying Salchester suddenly set up a high shriek of agony. Tim became aware of the smothering beat of the growing sun. "We can't stay here," he observed. "This fellow will have them on to us in a minute, kicking up all this row. We must get out of it."

"Quite so," agreed the other. "But how are we to get back?"

There was now no one moving at all on the ridge. Occasionally a wounded man would writhe in agony, and the watchful machine-gunners would spray his vicinity with bullets, making the clothes of the dead lift and flap. A good two hundred yards separated the couple from any cover—an absolutely exposed stretch. Along one side of the ridge ran the almost obliterated remains of the communication trench which had connected the redoubt on Pip Four with the advanced position. "That trench looks about our best chance," Tim remarked. "If we can only reach it."

"We must watch our chance, and then bolt for it. Ah! What's that?"

Indistinctly through the tangled masses of barbed wire, they observed a number of Bulgar heads bobbing and jolting across the tumbled shell holes of the earthwork. Evidently they intended to re-occupy the lost ground, and were sending out a preliminary patrol. "Now's our chance," said Saunders. "Let them get well out, and then run for it—between them and their trenches, if possible. Then the Emma Gees can't fire."

The Bulgarians halted doubtfully at the wire, and then, as nothing happened, advanced in to the ridge. "Now!"

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cried Saunders, when they had gone a few yards. He jumped from the shell hole; Tim followed, and the few men who had been cowering round them leaped to their feet. Tim blazed away with his revolver, as he ran, at the backs of the Bulgarian patrol, and from in front of them came a crackle of isolated shots, and a Lewis gun spat furiously. "Damn it all, our own side's going to do us in now!" thought Tim, dancing inanely as the bullets of this fusillade sang round his knees. He saw, out of the corner of his eye, the Bulgar patrol turning to run, and then he was in the battered communication trench, scrambling and crouching frantically away from Pip Four. All over the ridge isolated figures rose and retired, while the Bulgar machine-guns were held impotent by their own patrol.

As the little band of survivors came over the brow of the hill there was a renewed chatter of fire, taking a final toll of their thin line. Then they were in cover; they slackened their pace, and descended toward Jackson's Ravine. A lone shrapnel shell whined and swooped viciously—a battery or two was getting over its gassing—and Saunders went suddenly head over heels. "Hit, old man?" Tim asked anxiously, bending over him.

"Afraid so," he answered gaspingly. "Between the shoulder blades."

Tim looked at his back. That part of his tunic seemed intact. "No sign of it," he remarked.

Saunders sat up and felt himself cautiously. "Poof!" he said, grinning his old grin. "A stone! I had wind up that time."

In Jackson's Ravine they found the bulk of the Wessex, who had been last in the attack; their colonel had seen the death-trap into which he was going, and had very properly extricated his men while there were still some of them left. The Salchesters could only muster some thirty men, without officers. The Pennines numbered forty-seven, including Saunders and Tim. "And an hour ago we were five hundred strong!" said the former. "Fineesh, the poor

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old Pennines! I joined 'em four years ago next week, at Prees Heath. . . ."

Tim became suddenly aware that the puttee had gone from his right leg, which was a mass of crusted gore and transverse scratches—evidently the work of barbed wire, though where it had occurred he had not the least idea.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

## *THE AMAZING ENCOUNTER*

FOLLOWED three days of despair and the bitterness of defeat—and there is nothing more bitter for the survivors, in unhappy retrospect and the promise of an even unhappier future, than a military disaster. Tim's mental depression, however, was in a sense alleviated by the increasing preoccupation of his lacerated leg, which, at the end of forty-eight hours, became such a flaming agony that he could not stand, sleep, or think of anything else. They dragged him away on a travoy—a stretcher slung between what looked like the shafts of a cart (only there was no cart)—to a Casualty Clearing Station, and as he jolted along he was dully conscious of a glare of burning in the northern sky, and an incredulous buzz and stir as troops struck camp and the guns pulled out of their battered emplacements. The division was just becoming aware of the fact that it was not defeated, but victorious.

Individual soldiers in modern war may easily misunderstand the guiding brains behind, especially when—as most of them were by the end of 1918—they are quite convinced that there aren't any—and the Pennines, having been almost annihilated without visible result, may be excused for supposing that they had failed. They could not know, of course, that even as they suffered and died there was already preparing that amazing surprise advance across eighty miles of precipice and crag, accomplished with knives and fists and very little else, by which Serbia, at long last, cut the throat of her old enemy, who had mistakenly shifted his guard to fend off the blows of the British. The defenses of the Central Powers were down like a house of cards, and the war was won. Perhaps the



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clustered dead on the deserted Pip Ridge slept easier that night.

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Tim came out of hospital at the end of October, to find Summer Hill half full of worn and haggard men from the prison camps of Bulgaria, and the British Salonica Force scattered far and wide. One divison was on the Danube; another was near Adrianople, ready to pounce should Turkey prove intractable; yet another was under canvas at Salonica, waiting for the shifting situation in the Near East to crystallize.

Tim's underlying thought, when his ordinary life, suspended in hospital, was due to begin again, was a vague wonder that there was no longer any Doiran front to go to; a cell in any Bastille has this effect on the mind of a released prisoner. It was so long since he had had to think for himself that he had almost lost the habit, but the exceeding uncertainty of the immediate future, amongst all this break-up of established things, roused him from his apathy. His prospects seemed uninviting; the remnant of the Pennines was now merged in a composite battalion somewhere in Thrace, under an officer of the Salchesters whom Tim did not hold in much esteem, and—except for Saunders—he felt no desire ever to see his old brigade again. He wanted, not unnaturally, to forget all it would have recalled as soon as possible, for he was still suffering from violent recurring nightmares in which he fought the Second Battle of Doiran all over again; his shocked nerves craved a change of scene. Even the fact that the Salonica Force had justified itself, and—in the firm opinion of every member of it—played the decisive part in winning the war, did not alter the fact that one was utterly, exhaustedly sick of the Balkans, the more so as there now remained nothing to be done there.

It was characteristic of the mentality of the soldiers of the time that the likelihood of an early opportunity of getting out of the army altogether never occurred to Tim for a moment; Germany had not yet surrendered, and even

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when she did he confidently anticipated a year or two of armed inaction while the politicians argued over the peace terms. Casting about for an avenue to the maximum of comfort he very soon thought of his linguistic capacities, of which a savage front-line pride would not have allowed him to make use before. Now, however, as the fighting seemed to be done with, one could consort with Base-*wallahs* without loss of self-respect. Russian was becoming increasingly important, for the allies were already beginning to coquet with the various anti-Bolshevik leaders, and without much difficulty Tim got himself posted to the staff of the expedition which was hastily gathered for the Black Sea when Turkey surrendered.

He was on a transport in Mudros harbor, waiting for the Dardanelles to be reported free from mines, when the news of the armistice with Germany came through. It roused no enthusiasm whatever on board; in that part of the world it was so patent and manifest a thing that when Turkey and Bulgaria and Austria had gone, Germany must go too, and heavy in the mind of every one was the consciousness of a fact much more obvious in the Near East than at home—the terrible mess the world was in. "I don't see what there is to make a fuss about," a grizzled temporary major of gunners voiced the general sentiments, when the news of the rejoicings in London came through. "It's going to take a few generations to put all this right. I've been up on the Danube; everybody's starving to death, or near it, all the way from Hamburg to Moscow. . . ."

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So Tim turned his back for ever on the Pearl of the Aegean, and fought the fires of his inflamed mind with fresh fires of a different but equally searing nature. It would be too much to say that he ever grew home-sick for Macedonia; but certainly there were times when the memory of Salonica and the controlled zone of the *Armée de l'Orient* seemed almost homely in its order and disciplined purposefulness. It is quite bad enough to see the machinery of civilization adapted to destructive ends, but

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it is even more impressive and shocking to see that machinery, rusty and deserted, after a crow-bar has been thrust into its busy midst.

As the occupation of the dying cities of a civilization not decayed but stabbed in the back progressed, grotesquely terrible impressions began to overlay the Pip Ridge horrors in Tim's mind. He saw the huge grain tips of Odessa, now so much old iron, and the petroleum pipeline at Batoum, which the Turks had not succeeded in putting in order since the capture of the wrecked Baku oilfields in the preceding April. He spent a night with French officers in a billet in Nicholaieff, a beautiful house hung with valuable pictures, its marble staircase adorned with fine pieces of statuary, from which every fiber of bedding and carpets had been removed. There was not a clew to the late occupant, though he must have been some one of importance; the place was simply derelict. In an upstairs room was a huge dolls' house, and Tim paused to speculate on the vanished children who had played there in such apparent security. Were they alive, or dead of starvation, or even now ragged and astray in the streets of some town? He talked to haggard scarecrows who had been local notabilities and commercial magnates, and negotiated with the civic authorities who were functioning here and there (in most places there were none) with the pleasant prospect of having their throats cut as soon as the allies might move away. Once he met a Russian cavalry colonel, a man with a name great in the capitals of Europe, who had been captured by the Turks and was now driving a cab in Tiflis for a living, with his feet wrapped in old rags; he at least was to have a brief return to his old calling in Denikin's offensive. He became accustomed to walking about with huge wads of paper money, which momentarily grew less valuable, so that in the end the entire pre-war capital of the state bank of Russia would not have bought a pair of boots. . . .

And in the early days of the new year he had an encounter which influenced the whole course of his life.

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Tim's *liaison* duties took him about a good deal, to interview and discipline commanders of stranded German units, Turkish leaders, Tzarist ex-generals with private armies of self-defense, and all the military riff-raff of the wrecked Caucasian countries. He was traveling on a rail-car one day—a Ford car fitted to run on the metals—along a branch line of the Baku-Batoum railway, and they ran through a wayside station containing the usual refugee train. All that part of the world, and indeed, all central Europe and the Balkans as well, seemed to be full of refugees after the armistice, though where they were all going, and what they expected to find there other than the famine and misery they had left behind, heaven alone knew. At any rate, travel they did; Tim was always coming across these crowded trains, usually standing engineless in sidings with the older people and the children dying in half-dozens and being buried in hurried shallow graves in the embankment, waiting for some allied transport officer to snatch an engine for the supply service and hustle them a few more miles towards their obscure destinations.

This station was like a hundred others; there was a long whitewashed hut, a siding, a water-tank, and a straggling fringe of acacias against a naked background of rocky mountains smeared at the crest-line with snow. The train stood on the siding, engineless as usual, frowsy as a rookery with the dingy effects of the refugees. The rail-car reduced speed to go through the station, but they would have passed on without stopping had they not caught a hail in English. Tim signed to the driver to stop, and an elderly man, followed by a middle-aged woman, came running across the metals towards them. "Thank God!" cried the man, struggling with a cough. "You're British, aren't you? The train has been attacked by bandits. They are molesting the women. My daughter—"

Tim looked across at the station hut; half a dozen ponies were grazing outside it. "Any other English people on the train?" he asked.

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"This lady, and an English clergyman," replied the other. Tim noticed that his face bore a large and recent bruise. "But hurry, for God's sake!"

Tim turned to the driver. "Take the car up to the points," he ordered, "and turn her round. Get these people aboard somehow; we must find room. Be ready to start the minute I get back. Walker, you come with me."

Followed by his orderly, a tall and stalwart Cumberland yeoman, he ran across the line towards the station house, the Englishman following. As they approached the building wild guffaws of laughter echoed from within; Tim opened the door noiselessly, and looked round unobserved. There were half a dozen cut-throats in the room, savage figures in a motley mixture of uniforms and rags, wearing Russian caps, Turkish greatcoats, and with swathings of sacking round their legs. Evidently they had thoroughly terrorized the refugees, and anticipated no interruption, for their rifles were stacked in a corner. At the further side of the room was a door leading to an inner division of the building: from behind this came a muffled feminine keening, that resigned note of dismay which had grown so familiar to Tim since he had come in contact with mass misery in Eastern Europe.

The bandits—from first to last Tim did not pause to enquire their nationality and persuasions—were gathered round a young girl, who was shrieking with a high piercing note of despair, and struggling to retain what was left of her clothing. Tim felt that instinctive shrinking from a rough-and-tumble which had survived from his gentle upbringing, but he advanced with the deliberation of the battle-trained soldier, and shot two of the ruffians at point blank range in the back. The orderly, with a grunt of satisfaction, bayoneted another in the kidneys, thus leveling the odds, for the elderly refugee had fished out a rifle from the pile in the corner, and was advancing to the fray, swinging it by the muzzle.

A filthy and villainous-looking creature in a sheepskin coat plucked out an automatic pistol, but fortunately it

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caught in the shaggy folds of his garment, and the bullet went into the ceiling. Tim fired an ineffectual couple of rounds at him, and tried to hit him with the butt as he ducked under the table and they rolled over together. Tim was conscious of shouts and shots, feet that trod him under, and a pair of arms, apparently of cast-iron, that were slowly squeezing the life out of him; then he rolled clear, to find his late antagonist lying on his back with the civilian still flailing at him with his unhandy weapon, and the orderly chasing the last of the bandits round the table as he fled for the door. Tim scrambled to his feet and rushed to the threshold; he had a momentary vision of their late antagonist in full retreat, menacing a growing crowd of the refugees from the train with a pistol. Tim raised his revolver. "Down!" he cried, and the people beyond the fugitive, understanding his gesture, scattered and dropped. The heavy Webley thudded in his hand, once and again; at the second shot the runner flung up his heels, and fell exactly as if he had been tripped. "Good shot, sir! That's settled 'im!" remarked the Cumberlander, firing coolly from the hip into the body of one of their recent adversaries, who was showing signs of reviving activity, and feeling for a weapon.

Tim stooped over the young woman, who was now lying in a huddled heap on the floor. She was well-looking enough, but of the ordinary Caucasian peasant type. "This isn't your daughter, is it?" he asked.

The refugee was already pulling and tugging at the locked inner door. "In here," he said, and doubled up in a furious paroxysm of coughing.

Tim stooped to the key-hole. "Stand clear!" he shouted, in English and in Russian, as he hastily "broke" his Webley and slipped in fresh cartridges. A couple of rounds wrecked the lock, and the door gave way before their shoulders; Tim jostled across the threshold, the pistol still smoking in his hand.

At the other side of the room were crouching a group of young women, amongst whom stood, in an attitude of

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defiance, with a billet of wood in her hand, a small erect figure with a startlingly pale face, in which blue eyes blazed under brilliant auburn hair. At the sight of the rescuers her expression changed to one of hesitation and incredulity; she gave a little moaning sound, and began to crumple up amongst the kneeling forms at her feet. "'Ere's another of 'em fainted," remarked the orderly in disgust.

Without wasting time on the others, Tim carried the English girl through the slowly spreading blood in the outer room and across the metals to the rail-car, casting wary glances right and left in case of possible trouble. He was not at all sure that their late adversaries might not be a part of somebody's army, and felt a pressing desire to get away. The driver was sitting at his wheel with his rifle across his knees; anxiously awaiting them in the car was the middle-aged lady whom Tim had previously seen, and a white-haired clergyman who wore, even now, a dingy semblance of the attire of his calling. Tim saw that he had been knocked about—trying to defend the women, no doubt. "Thank God, Fanshawe!" ejaculated the parson, descending to assist them. "I trust your daughter is not injured?"

"She's all right," Tim said briefly. "Get in, will you? There may be some more of these cattle about."

They packed themselves into the inadequacies of the car; the man whom the clergyman called Fanshawe was still coughing intermittently, and his hands were trembling from the nervous shock to which he had just been subjected. The girl remained unconscious. They moved slowly out of the station, unhindered and unnoticed, for the refugees were buzzing like flies about the station-house, bringing out their rescued women-folk and wreaking their vengeance on such of their enemies as had the ill-luck to be still alive. Tim sat with the small figure of the girl on his knees, and her auburn hair brushing his cheek. Who on earth were these people, he wondered, and where had they come from? It was not possible to

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talk, with the fierce blast of the rail-car's passage in their faces, and they sat in silence, screwing up their eyes against the wind. Now and again Tim could see the man Fanshawe shaking with that rending cough; the refugees were all thinly clad, and Tim drew his greatcoat round the girl's slim form.

They slid under the mosques and minarets of Tiflis, and then the amazing thing occurred. The girl opened her eyes, looked up at him in a terrified way, and said, quite clearly: "Tim! Don't leave us, Tim, will you?" Then she lapsed into stupor or unconsciousness again.

To say that Tim was surprised is to understate the matter by ninety-nine per cent. He got down before the office of the R.T.O., still with his burden in his arms, in a state of the liveliest stupefaction. Fanshawe! The name conveyed absolutely nothing to him. How did this young woman know his name? He had never consciously seen her before; and yet—and yet—that particular shade of auburn hair was as familiar as could be. He became aware of the Assistant R.T.O., a pleasant-faced rubicund young man with gold *pince nez,* coming out of his office in a state of extreme curiosity. "Hullo, Jevons!" he said. "These are refugees from somewhere—English. They've been attacked by bandits up the line. This lady's fainted; is there—?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Jevons, and became immediately active and helpful. They half led, half carried the younger woman into the little back room where Jevons slept on a bed of empty boxes (Tim saw him snatch down some of the usual Gallic naughtinesses from the walls), and left her to the ministrations of the elder lady. Then they withdrew to the office, where a gaping signaler with a blue-and-white armlet sat at a tapping instrument, and the R.T.O.'s tin of Gold Flake and pipes on the mantelpiece gave quite a homely touch to what had been a waiting room in a barbaric Caucasian town. "I'm sure we are tremendously obliged to you, sir," remarked the clergyman, turning to Tim. "We have been through a great

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deal—a very great deal; but I'm not sure that that was not the ugliest situation of all."

"Have you—are you getting out of Russia, or something?" asked Tim.

"Yes, exactly. You must be wondering— Let us introduce ourselves. This gentleman—" he indicated his companion, who was coughing anew over the fire—"is our late Consul in Ykutsk, Mr. Fanshawe. My name is Forbes; I had the English Church there. The elder lady with us is Mrs. Norton, widow of one of the leading merchants in Astrakhan—I'm sorry to say that the Bolsheviks murdered her husband. The younger lady is Miss Fanshawe."

Consul! Things were beginning to connect in Tim's mind. "Were you ever in Valparaiso, sir?" he asked, turning to the man at the fire.

"Two years," replied the other between wheezes.

Then Tim understood. The girl now lying on Jevons' Wolseley valise was Viola, the little girl of the house next door to his grandfather's in the Calle Hospital, grown up.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

## *TURNING THE CORNER*

TIM was living at an hotel in Batoum at that time—the ghost of a modern hotel, with lifts that did not run, electric switches that controlled nothing, waterless taps, dead steam-heat, and a proprietor whose demeanor might have been due either to fear for his property, or apprehension lest a genuine proprietor might make his appearance; and in this hostelry, after a meal and restoratives in Tiflis, where also Tim had procured a few necessaries in the way of coats and wraps for the journey, the refugees took up their quarters, and Mr. Fanshawe, who was seriously ill from bronchitis, found a long overdue bed. The others dined with Tim in the main dining-room, still wearing the wraps that Tim had bought, over their ragged clothes, and looking at the table-cloth and the shabbinesses of what had once been a fashionable restaurant as if they had been removed from a workhouse to the Carlton. And they told their story. The habits and mannerisms of the English upper middle class still clung to them, and they told it exactly as they might have described a long railway journey in England; but instead of such incidents as losing a bag or an umbrella, encountering an impudent porter, or missing a connection and having to wait for a couple of hours, they mentioned, in exactly the same way, such adventures as Mr. Fanshawe's imprisonment for many months for aiding Czarist officers, and the efforts of his daughter and the clergyman to get him out; Mr. Norton's murder by looting soldiers, the seizure of his business and home, and his wife's flight with what she stood up in; long distances tramped in bursting shoes; rivers crossed in the dark; and the ingenuity (retailed with pride) which had preserved a little supply of English gold, the ultimate



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instrument of their salvation, through a dozen attempts at robbery. In fact, theirs was a commonplace enough story to those who were familiar with the exodus of the better classes from Russia.

Naturally Tim's chief interest was directed towards the little friend of his boyhood, whom he had met again under such extraordinary circumstances; but in the first place she was herself scarcely recovered from her ordeal of that day, in the second she left the table to look after her father as soon as she could, and in the third she was—well, to be candid, dirty beyond the remedy of any casual ablution, like her companions; so that it was a little difficult to gauge what she was like. She thanked Tim with a tired little smile for what he had done for them, said she had known him at once, and went on to enquire in the same breath about doctors and hot water bottles, so that Tim went up to his room that night without any adequate idea as to either her physical or mental characteristics.

Tim entered his chilly bedroom, lit the candle, and discovered with satisfaction that a home mail had come in during the day. There were two letters from Chile, one in his grandfather's old-fashioned hand, and the other in the firm square fist of Admiral Gonzalez. Tim selected the first, and sat down to read it on the edge of his bed, still in his greatcoat and with his breath smoking in the cold air of the room.

The letter was dated November 6th. "My dear Tim," wrote the General, in his usual excellent English,

"We were very glad to hear that you had at last managed to obtain permission to go to England, and that you had enjoyed yourself so much in London. It is astonishing how life and gayety cling to big cities even when they are half destroyed, as I remember very well in the case of Paris in 1870; though, to be sure, Paris was not so knocked about as London must now be by the constant dropping of bombs so much more powerful than anything of which we ever dreamed. The German illustrated papers give photographs procured from somewhere—

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neutral travelers, I suppose—which are positively appalling.

"It is also splendid—for one can only wish this war to stop; any victory for either side is quite impossible now—to hear as we have just done that Turkey and Austria are both out of the war as well as Bulgaria, and that therefore (although one fears to speak too soon) you will be in no more danger from hostilities in your part of the world. What will happen with regard to my own country it is difficult to say; Germany has been badly led all through by self-seeking people—very different to the leaders of the last century, who went to war with no other thought except to serve the Fatherland. But I am in hopes that the very violence of the disasters which have overtaken our cause may enable the Emperor to cut loose from all these evil counselors and take direct command of the army in person, like his father before him. If he is anything like his father, my old general, whom the men all called *unser Fritz,* then we shall see what we shall see; it is now too late to save anything but honor, but the German Army is still unbeaten in the field, and that at least may still be preserved. That is what I hope to hear from hour to hour. As you know, I always thought that this war was a mistake, whoever was responsible for its beginning. Your country and mine could very well have kept out of it. But I never realized, and I do not suppose any man alive did, quite what a tragedy it was to be. This war is the first in history in which there is to be no victor; I do not see how the central powers are to be made to pay for it, especially since it appears that Austria is splitting up into several states all of which now pretend to have been friendly with their enemies, and thus exempt from penalties. This may be all very well for your Lloyd George and Wilson, but it would not have deceived us when *we* beat the Austrians." (The censor had made an attempt to delete this last sentence, but Tim made it out against the flame of the candle.)

"With regard to us, there is very little for me to say,

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for we live a very quiet life and this big house seems much too large for us now. Gretchen and Elsa are such pretty girls, and I wish that we older people could give them a more enjoyable time. We do our best, but, oh, Tim, we cannot help thinking much of all those whom we have lost in these last few years, and there are few joyful faces amongst our German friends nowadays.

"Your Uncle Max is now promoted to General, as I think I told you before. By the way, you will be sorry to hear that we have lost the old black dog, Nerón the Second, who was the son of Neckelmann's Nerón. He was run over by a motor-car, of which the town is becoming full, owing to the great profits which the business people are making. The German houses seem to do as well as any, though how I do not understand. Old Primitivo, for so long our faithful *mayordomo,* has had to be pensioned off, being very lame with the rheumatics. The younger Neckelmann twin, Ines, is to be married to Fortunato Conejo, son of old Don Andres at Olmue. Otto is very pleased, for it is a fine match.

"God bless you and keep you safe, my dear boy; I look forward to the day when I shall see you again, if it shall please God to spare us both to meet once more.

"Your affectionate grandfather,

"H. HARDT V. SCHULENBERG."

"Poor old grandad!" said Tim with an affectionate smile. "He's had a shock or two since then." He turned to the Admiral's letter, and as he read the smile died out of his eyes, and his face became pinched and bleak.

It was dated a week after the other.

"Dear Tim (it read)

"I do not know that I ever faced any duty with more reluctance than I do this; but these things have to be faced, as we soldiers and sailors know. Your grandfather and my old friend died on the 11th November, at about six in the evening, and was buried to-day beside his wife in the Foreign Cemetery. It was the greatest funeral ever seen in Valparaiso; all the garrison troops, detachments from

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the *Armada*, banners and deputations from the *gremios de obreros*—you remember how your grandfather was constantly consulted by poor folk about their difficulties?—a great crowd of mounted *huasos* from the Limache Valley, and representatives from the commercial community, including, I am glad to say, a great many British, for that old Don Tomás Bannister gave the lead.

"The General died very suddenly, of an *ataque cerebral* it is presumed, sitting at that carved writing-desk of his in his room. He was alone at the time. I have no doubt that the events of the day distressed him profoundly, for there were some painful scenes amongst the Germans here when the news came through of the surrender, and the flight of the Kaiser and the Crown Prince. There were some very bitter things said, and dear old Dr. Kuhn, who as you know lost his only son quite early in the war, went into the German Club and fired a revolver at the portrait of the Kaiser there, crying out that the German nation had been betrayed, and had to be carried out in a kind of fit. It upset your grandfather very much. He spent the rest of the day in his room, and there he was found with his head on his arms on the desk in front of him, as if he were asleep. He had been looking through his papers, and had got out that old proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles—his original copy, which you probably remember, a big square printed document, rather faded.

"He was eighty-one this year, so that as between soldier and sailor we must console ourselves with the thought of how long he was spared, and what very great dangers he had escaped in his life. But I do not think we shall easily find another such man.

"Well, my dear Tim, the war is over at last, and I cannot close even this letter without felicitating you on coming through so many perils without a scratch. It is truly remarkable. There was, of course, great excitement about the armistice here, and the merchant houses are much concerned at the possible dislocation of business. For my

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part, I hope that we will now be able to get our fine new flagship, the *Almirante Latorre,* which was taken over, of course, from the builders by the British Admiralty, and christened the *Canada* for the length of the war. She was at Jutland, but is reported to be none the worse. Also, we shall now be able to get rid of the German sailors from the *Dresden,* who have been encamped on the Isla de Chiloe ever since 1915. Who is to pay us for their keep, now that Germany is defeated and in revolution, I do not know. The bay is full of interned German merchantmen.

"Your Uncle Max is naturally much distressed by his loss, and I fear that when you next see him you will find him much changed. He intends to sell the house in Calle Hospital, which is of course much too large for the family, and also the neighborhood is not what it was; all the foreigners now go to live in Vina del Mar, and the upper part of the Calle Hospital, beyond the English School, is filling up with dirty *ranchos* and *conventillos. A propósito,* I ought to tell you that you inherit quite a large sum of money now, your mother's share of her parents' property under the Chilian Law, though your grandfather's heavy investments in German War Loan will perhaps have lessened it; that one does not know yet. I am once more named your trustee, and as soon as I can I will liquidate what is yours and send the result to the solicitors in London, for I do not think it wise in these times to have money in any country except England or America, unless of course you are born elsewhere, and bound to support your own country. Here in Chile we have made enough money out of the war to settle all our fiscal difficulties and debts, but nothing has been done; the *politicos* have stolen it as usual.

"I subscribe myself, my dear Tim,
"Yours with affection,
"SANTIAGO GONZALEZ P."

Tim sat for a long time on the edge of his bed, staring at nothing. Hitherto there had always been at the back of his mind the thought that he had, albeit infinitely far

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away, a niche in the scheme of things that he might call home, a place where he could re-shape his shattered philosophy for the future—for it now appeared, astoundingly enough, that there was to be a future after all. But the General was dead, the old house was to pass into other hands, and Tim knew that he could never face his Uncle Max without seeing always at his elbow the ghost of Kurt, whose death he had brought about. The old life in Chile was gone for ever, and could not be recaptured even temporarily. It was Tim's lowest hour.

"Well, he'll never know about Maudie now, anyway," he comforted himself coldly. "Nor about Kurt. . . ."

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Next morning he went about his business, which would not wait for private sorrows—first of all, however, obtaining a large advance from the Base Cashier, which he put into the hands of the Rev. Mr. Forbes. "The authorities will look after you, I suppose, when you get in touch with them, padre," he explained. "But meanwhile here's some ready cash for immediate necessities. Oh, that's all right, pay me back when you've arranged things. Let me know if there's anything I can do, won't you? I've got to be off now—on that job I was doing yesterday, when I came across you."

He forgot about the refugees in the course of the day, and he entered the dining-room that night, stiffened with much travel and gloomily pre-occupied, without so much as thinking of them; but as he crossed to the table that he usually shared with two officers of the Motor Transport a voice hailed him softly, and he turned round to see an entirely strange young woman, in clothes which his masculine eye took in vaguely as *chic,* small and slim, who smiled and looked at him with honest friendly eyes set wide apart under delicate brown eyebrows. He surveyed the soft wave of her newly-washed hair with its bronze ribbon, and her tip-tilted nose with its slight dusting of freckles across the bridge, and realized rather slowly that this was Viola Fanshawe. She read his thoughts with

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complete facility. "Yes, it is me," she observed, her smile widening. "I've spent most of the day in hot water, and I burnt every rag I had on. It's been wonderful to do some shopping again."

"I had no idea that one could in Batoum," Tim replied. "May I—are you dining? Can I join you? I've just got in."

"Oh, Batoum's like Paris after Russia. Yes, do sit down. I'm afraid I was rather abrupt last night. Poor Daddy—I didn't thank you properly for what you did."

"Oh, any one would have done that, of course," said Tim uncomfortably. "How is Mr. Fanshawe?"

The cheerfulness left her face, which, as Tim saw at a second glance, bore clear signs of the privations of the recent past—a pinched look and a slight hollowness of the eyes. "He's very bad, I'm afraid. The doctors are talking of getting him removed to a military hospital—it's so difficult to keep the temperature even, in this vault of a hotel. I've rigged up a steam kettle, but—it's bronchitis, you know. He's been walking about with the most dreadful cough for days, and there was nothing one could do." She smiled, with a plucky attempt at cheerfulness. "You see, we did have rather an uncomfortable journey."

"I know. The padre was telling me all about it." It had seemed an extraordinary odyssey then, but now, facing this frail slip of a girl, he wondered how in the world she had accomplished it. "What are you going to do next?"

"Well, of course we can't go any further until Daddy's better. I think Mr. Forbes will go on by the first boat to Constantinople, and so will Mrs. Norton; his wife is in England, and he hasn't heard from her for nine months, and her married daughter too. I shall be sorry to part from them; they've been such dears in all this. Just imagine Mrs. Norton—her husband murdered, practically before her eyes, and her home destroyed, and yet she never complained whatever happened. Mr. Forbes is

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under the doctor too; he was badly bruised by the butt of a rifle when they—when I—"

"It was a bit of luck our happening to go that way," said Tim. "It was just chance; I might just as well have left that particular job over until another time. And I say, what an extraordinary thing it's being *you!* Do you remember how I used to climb up the tree and talk to you over the wall? I was never so flabbergasted in my life as when you called me Tim."

"I don't wonder you didn't know me," Viola replied. "I was a horribly bedraggled object. Ugh! Would you have known me, though, if my face had been clean enough to see?"

Tim looked at her. "No," he admitted honestly. "I wouldn't. But then you were a little girl of—how much?"

"Eleven."

"Eleven—with a pigtail, when I saw you last."

"I suppose women do alter more than men as they grow up. You don't look so very different, in essentials. What have you been doing since those days?"

The exploration of this theme kept them busy until the claims of the invalid removed Viola in haste, some two hours later.

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Mr. Fanshawe fought with his complaint, struggling bitterly to regain his hold on the life that was slipping away from him; and during the fortnight of his losing combat, Nature went on her way, arranging for the future generation over the very death-bed of the present.

Tim was now twenty-one years old, and, owing to the speed with which he had burnt up his emotional resources, felt and thought as a man ten years older might have done. He was conscious of all that vague blind urge for a fixed element in his life—the family-creating instinct—which comes to men in gentler times as they leave their twenties behind, and see the friends of their first youth drifting off one by one to distant places, and a new generation arising that knows them not; but of course, in Tim's

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experience, they were snatched away either to sudden death or to the other end of the earth by the military machine which had held the world's youth in its grip, in a very much more rapid and ruthless fashion. When Tim thought of all the faces that had come into his life, had been familiar and esteemed, and had vanished like puffs of smoke—the old family circle that had gone, Macleod's kindly Scots features, the Puck-like lineaments of little Short, the horse face of Nutty Nicholls, the weather-beaten seaman's countenance of Carnforth, Meadows and his kindly eyes, Saunders' cheerful ugliness—all vanished into the unknown, he felt an instinctive desire for an anchor, something that might survive out of this shifting world peopled by ghosts, or in which he himself moved like a ghost. The peculiar haunted atmosphere of derelict Russia, in which even the British officers changed every day, intensified this craving. He had reached, perhaps prematurely, the stage in his development when he needed a mate, a permanent companion; that was what it amounted to. And, of course, the fact that he was already a married man, in the legal sense of the term, had nothing to do with it; Maudie was not, had never been, never could be, anything except an erotic adventure. He had never, since that first disclosure in the cabin of the *Sycophantic,* thought of her as anything else, though he had postponed consideration of how she was to be finally disposed of for the time.

There are a favored few men lucky enough to find in time a woman who, as they know at once in their bones and afterwards remember to have known, is *the* woman. Some find her too late, and then there is tragedy; others never find her, and live quite happily married without, only vaguely aware, if they are aware at all, of something they have missed. Tim was conscious almost immediately of the peculiar sympathy which had once made two children talk for hours in utter absorption over a garden wall, and accepted it without analysis; he entered on a friendship such as he had never believed possible with one of

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the opposite sex, a friendship as completely free from self-consciousness or restraint as the companionship of Saunders. The sex impulse was to come later. Poets and romantics would portray love as an affair of languishing looks and sighs, and that may perhaps have been in the days of duennas and the segregation of the sexes; but, in these emancipated times, when two people who are really made for one another meet, they first find a mutual understanding so profound as almost to obliterate that instinct which sends any healthy young man's glance at every personable female he encounters, and *vice versa.* Then, of course, the day comes when their eyes meet, something snaps, and there comes the moment of realization, stunning and blinding.

In the brief interviews which Tim's duties and the requirements of the sick-room allowed they met and talked —soul-revealing talk, as unlike the fatuities of fiction as could well be imagined. Tim, man-like, did most of it, and, oh, the relief, the easement, it was to him—for he was three-quarters shell-shocked—to let loose a little of the bottled-up hysteria that filled his soul, to which he had never dared surrender in the company of his fellow-damned (for if once people had begun to do that, of course, half the army would have been raving) to somebody who had seen enough and was understanding enough to know what he meant without being a part of it all. Sometimes, when he was pouring out some awful memory which had awakened him shouting at nights, he would find himself hot-eyed and out of control, seeing nothing clearly but that sweet delicate face beneath the aureole of auburn hair which was his lifebuoy, his line of retreat to his ordinary rigid self-repression. And then the restful voice would bring him back to a sort of refreshed lassitude, in which they would talk of books or pictures, or anything except the war. He wondered sometimes just how much he revealed of the smoldering fires in his mind. . . . But she did not seem to think any the less of him for it.

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Then, contradictorily, when Mr. Fanshawe's condition became hopeless and his daughter, worn out with recent nervous strain and present grief, abandoned herself to despair, who was then so comforting, so assured, such a bulwark of strength, as the three-quarters ripened shell-shock patient? That was what he had learnt in the war, and could do better than anything else—support the fainting spirit of others. Many a time, on some endless night march in a blizzard or long tour of under-manned trench duty, had he jockeyed a fever-ridden company through by just such an exercise of histrionics, himself feeling more down-hearted than any of them. So these two pieces of war wreckage found and comforted each other, as two straws cling in a mill-race.

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After the late consul at Ykutsk had been buried in the local foreign cemetery, where "Here lies" and *"Hier ruht im Gott"* were inscribed in juxtaposition to point the absurdity of human quarrels, Viola and Tim walked down a long cobbled street and so out past the fringes of the town to a district of olive groves above the sea, which was belying its name with a wintry blue sparkle. They walked in silence, and were quite careless of where they went; the girl was dry-eyed, utterly stricken by what had occurred, and had replied in a frozen way to the clumsy condolences of the people at the funeral, of whom there had been many, for their story was known, and the girl's fragility and courage had aroused much sentimental sympathy amongst the kind-hearted warriors round about. Tim, shooting sidelong glances at the set face beside him, was filled with a moving compassion. "If only there was anything I could *do!*" he thought, feeling most frightfully sorry for her. "I wish to God she'd cry—"

In due course she did cry, on a little sun-warmed beach beneath sandy cliffs, where there was no one to see except Tim, that good friend; and she had it out at length with the wild abandonment of overstrain. And somehow—how they never quite remembered—when that outburst

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was over, her head was on his shoulder, and he was comforting her in a state of emotional turmoil such as he had never known before. The veil had been drawn from between them, and for the first time they realized what had happened. . . .

It was not until after an indefinite length of time, when they turned to go back to the hotel—he to write a report of an interview with a Kurdish chieftain, and she to pack for the morrow's steamer—that they remembered actualities. "By the way," said Viola, "what about your wife?"

"By George!" ejaculated Tim. "Do you know, I'd never thought of her?" He was perfectly sincere; he had forgotten the existence of Maudie for several hours.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### *REPAIRS*

ON a frosty morning about a year later Miss Viola Fanshawe came down the long back garden of her aunts' house at Rickmansworth to feed the hens. She was wearing an old Burberry, and her soft mass of tawny hair was uncovered; she was perceptibly plumper, the angles of privation had returned to the normal curve of young womanhood, and her blue eyes no longer looked so pathetically large in her face as those of the troubled refugee who had stood beside her father's grave in Batoum.

She distributed largesse from her tin to the exasperating tenants of the run—who, in the intervals of cannibalism, disease, and long periods of sterility, condescended to provide an occasional breakfast for those who paid their keep—and then, after glancing carefully round, disappeared into a rustic summer-house. The sight of any one making use of one of these uncomfortable erections would have been unusual enough at any season of the year, and it was a prodigy on a frosty January morning; but when Viola drew a letter from her pocket, written in copying-ink pencil on thin foreign paper, and proceeded to find her place amongst its many pages, her behavior was partly explained. She had sought this retreat for the sake of privacy.

Viola was not exactly dependent upon her aunts, the Misses Jessica, Janet and Elisabeth Fanshawe, for she had a tiny income of her own, some one hundred and fifty pounds a year, inherited from her mother, who had died many years before; but she was living with the ladies, and it was only sensible to respect their susceptibilities, which had crystallized into neat bright sharp facets about the year 1875. They had lived in the house at Rickmansworth



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uninterruptedly since they were born, and to them the most terrible thing that had happened since dear papa died in 1888 was the bursting of the boiler in the kitchen in 1904. The war they had not noticed, except in so far as it raised annoying difficulties in the catering department; even their purses had been unaffected, for they had had Vickers shares, which on the advice of their solicitor they had sold at the right moment, patriotically buying War Loan in their stead. Their utter insulation and blind confidence, not two hundred miles from Ypres and not thirty from the bomb-focus of the metropolis, sometimes amazed Viola, and she frankly admitted to herself that any explanation of Tim to such unconscious survivals of the past was beyond her. The aunts knew, of course, that dear Viola received an occasional letter from a Major Staveley, who had been of assistance to poor dear George and herself in that dreadful Russia; but their idea of a major was based on Major Reddaway (half-pay) who lived on the Chorley Wood road, and had such nice daughters. If they thought about it at all, they pictured to themselves an old gentleman with a white mustache benevolently tucking Viola into a railway carriage, and buying papers at some sort of Russian Smiths' bookstall (for recitals of horrors simply ran off the waterproofed minds of the sisters, and after Viola had recounted some hair-raising adventure, they would smile in a superior way, as befitted those who were no longer inexperienced girls, and say, with gentle reproof: "You should have pulled the communication cord, dear" or "Was there no respectable person—or better, a constable—in sight?"). The idea of the major being twenty-two, and at that age not only married once, but anxious to marry their niece as soon as he could contrive to get rid of his first encumbrance, was one which, Viola felt, they would find a little difficulty in grasping. So for the present she considered it expedient to read her somewhat voluminous correspondence in private.

She smoothed out the folded sheets, and went on from where she had left off. "As you know, dear, when her

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letter came saying that they had gone off together, I sent it along to Haythornthwaite's, explaining that I wanted a divorce, and asked what about it. I had no idea about how such things were done, and was surprised—though not so surprised as they were when they heard I was married—to find that it could all be done by them, as I was on active service, and that they had managed to get the suit presented or fixed or filed for some court or session which was coming off soon. (I wrote to you about this before, but the letter may have gone astray like so many others.) Well, the whole thing has gone through without a hitch, as I expect you saw in the reports—I believe my having been a minor helped—and I have got a decree nisi, which means as far as I can make out that in six months, or early next year, the marriage is washed out. So that's that.

"I hadn't worried very much about getting rid of Maudie—I knew she could always be bought off, though the price might have been stiff—but I must say I didn't expect to get away with it so easily. Her letter was full of humbug about 'our youthful mistake' and having 'found the right man,' and I wondered whether she was losing her grip; but when H.'s explained that this Postlethorpe person is a baronet and has a jam-works and half a million I saw the light. However, it lets me out, which is all I wanted, and taking one thing with another I'm well away with it. I can't help taking off my hat to Maudie—she knows what she wants, and she gets it; she may finish up a peeress yet, which isn't so bad for a Blackton bricklayer's daughter, is it? I worried like the devil over her at one time—and looking back I wonder why. That's the way, isn't it?

"Well, we are back on the coast now, and Denikin is smashed to blazes; perhaps I shall at last be able to get myself away from this Military Mission. When I volunteered for the Army of Occupation at the armistice I hadn't any idea of letting myself in for all this, I can tell you—even if I hadn't met you; but as they say, officers of experience with my trick of languages can't be found every

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day, and they've simply refused to demobilize me so far. I must say that as I've had to stay, I'm glad I haven't missed old Denikin's offensive, because it really was the most amazing show. A handful of stout fellows, winning victories over ten times their number, with all the scum of the old Russian army and aristocracy tagging along behind for what they could steal—the very same people who were the reason for the Bolshies coming back and expecting the country to kiss them. I don't think Denikin had a single honest supply officer—I once saw a whole hospital equipment sent by the French, beds, linen, instruments and everything, all sold off by the officer who got it, while the wounded were left to lie on the ground. And the looting and murdering that went on! And yet in spite of it all they very nearly brought it off; at Orel, at the end of October, they were halfway across Russia and within two hundred miles of Moscow, but they never got any further. Denikin had forty million people behind him, but they wouldn't back him up, and I don't wonder. If anything's to be done in Russia it's got to come from within; adventurers and the old Czarist champagne-swilling, ration-stealing, woman-chasing officers aren't going to do much, and the sooner our people and the French get to realize that the better for their pockets.

"The things I've seen in the advance through Poltava and Kieff to Orel and back again to Odessa are simply too beastly to put down on paper. I've seen everything you saw, dear, endlessly repeated in fifty different places. A fellow I met in Kieff—rather a decent sort, who'd been a merchant, said to me: 'Do you know what I have done by helping Denikin? I have sentenced to death my old father in Moscow, and my sister and her husband and three children in Petrograd, and two old aunts and a cousin or so. They will all be shot for this.' He said it quite simply. That's how the Bolshies keep in the saddle.

"Well, I'm going down to Constant. to-morrow, and hope to get demobbed in a few weeks; it's been a dreadfully long time, darling, but—"

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Early in the spring of 1920 Tim landed at Southampton, a civilian again, but not feeling nor looking at all like one in his cavalry boots and spurs, fur-lined greatcoat, and red tabs and hatband, with the five medal ribbons on his tunic—the Military Cross, General Service, Victory, Croix de Guerre, and Greek Military Cross. Even as he stepped ashore he was vaguely conscious of England's message to her soldier sons—that silent remorseless voice, which irritated most of the fighting men beyond measure at first, with its inexorable: "I am untouched and unchanged. If you are not, so much the worse for you."

Viola came up by appointment to meet him at Waterloo; and now, of course, is the chronicler's opportunity of describing one of those pretty scenes which were so popular in war fiction—the handsome warrior jumping from the train while it was yet on the move, and, oblivious of other people, folding the waiting girl to his heart with a cry of rapture. Unfortunately it did not happen quite like that.

The train was fifteen minutes behind time, for it was a morning of thick fog, and Viola was chilled and a little out of temper when it drew in at last. She looked up and down the train as the passengers scurried away, but the platform cleared and she saw no signs of Tim; eventually she observed, far along the train, a trio of officers helping a fourth, who was apparently tipsy, out of a carriage. Viola was a little disgusted by such a spectacle at this hour of the day; two of the officers took their comrade firmly by the arms and began to lead him down the platform, while the other followed laden with haversacks and small luggage, and then, in the midst of her disapproval, she recognized in the sagging central figure her own particular property. "Good heavens!" she ejaculated in horror, and hurried forward.

The party halted enquiringly as she accosted them. Tim raised a drawn face, and looked at her vaguely. "Hullo, Viola," he remarked between chattering teeth. "Got a

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t-touch of fever," He swayed a little, and the man beside him said: "Hold up, Major!"

The warriors eyed Viola respectfully but with appreciation. "Well," said one of them, after a slightly awkward pause, "better be getting off this draughty platform, hadn't we? Come along, sir." They moved off in the direction of the barrier.

Viola, feeling singularly helpless, thought of the luggage; that at least was something she could attend to. With the help of the remaining officer, a cheerful rubicund little captain, she salvaged a battered canvas valise, and a wooden box, stenciled with obscure Teutonic numbers and letters (it was in fact an old German bomb box), and marked with Tim's name in indelible pencil. The captain scrutinized her covertly; she hadn't a wedding nor an engagement ring, and she didn't look like the major's sister. He gave it up. "He was taken with the shivers in the train," he explained, as they walked down the platform behind the porter. "We had a beastly chilly crossing, and it brought on his malaria."

"Does he often get attacks like this?"

"Couldn't say, I'm sure. Only met him on the boat. Where have they gone to, I wonder?" They halted irresolutely, until Viola observed a khaki-clad figure trying to catch their eye from the door of the Refreshment Room. Inside, Tim was gulping down hot coffee under the solicitous eyes of the waitresses and of his remaining brother-in-arms. "Got the luggage?" asked this gentleman. "Good! Now shall we put you into a cab, Major, or what?"

"Yes, please. Jolly g-good of you to bother," said Tim. "I shall be all right once I g-get to bed. These goes are soon over."

"Have you had 'em often? Glad I wasn't in Salonica."

"On and off, ever since 1917." Tim rose shakily to his feet. "Thanks very much, you chaps. I'll be getting off t-to some hotel. I wonder which—"

A fresh perplexity seized Viola; for it was, in 1920,

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next to impossible to get a room in a London hotel at short notice, as she knew. The chubby captain was evidently struck by the same thing. "Hotel?" he repeated, pausing as Tim took his arm. "I thought you—that is, that this lady— If you haven't booked a room you may have a bit of bother."

Tim felt feebly irritated. This was a hell of a country where a man couldn't unstrap his valise in a waiting-room. He sat down helplessly, and the others considered this new difficulty. "Tell you what," suggested one. "You stay here, Major, and we'll do a bit of telephoning. Can't go careering about London in that state."

The three good Samaritans withdrew to make a combined onslaught on the telephone booths, and left Tim and Viola together. Tim smiled a wan smile. "Sorry to be in such rotten form, Viola," he said huskily. "I'll be better to-morrow."

Viola, unused to malaria patients, was not reassured, although he spoke the truth. He certainly looked, with his blue lips and drawn face, as if he would not be better for a week. "Oh, my dear!" she said. "No wonder you're thin; I shall have to look after you, I can see that." A great compassion filled her; she could not have expressed her feelings in words, but something of the fundamental pathos of the time, a sense of irreparable loss, gripped her at the sight of this wasted boy with his ravaged good looks. She too had endured, and acquired clear vision through much hardship.

"Not much of a prospect for you," observed Tim, with a frozen grin.

She said nothing, but her eyes replied, and she took the thin hand that had been ungloved to take the coffee cup. As they sat waiting on the cane settee they both felt oddly moved. "It's good to be home, anyhow," said Tim inadequately.

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Tim's good-natured chance acquaintance managed at length to secure for him a room at a residential hotel in

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one of the side streets behind the British Museum, and having bestowed him in a taxi with his luggage, they sheepishly received his and Viola's thanks and passed out of their lives. Viola went home to Rickmansworth in a very uneasy frame of mind despite Tim's assurances, but he, with a matter-of-factness of long habit, took tea, quinine, and aspirin, and sweated the fever out of himself in a way that astonished the chambermaid. "Lor'!" she remarked to a colleague. "Look at them blankets! Soaked right through, an' you could have wrung out his pyjamas! Pore young feller! Thanked me for my trouble that nice, and gave me a quid—"

One of the odd features about malaria is the suddenness of the bouts and the rapidity with which they pass. By the following morning Tim's temperature was subnormal, and on the next day he was about again. He lost no time in going to his solicitors in Chancery Lane, whose white-paneled office—which now recalled the Healthy Baths of Boton—seemed to be quite unchanged. "I think Sir Henry's in his room," observed Mr. Isherwood, who attended to him, after they had briefly discussed the divorce, now within a month of completion, and other current business. "I'll ask whether he'll see you." The little solicitor lowered his voice as if he were mentioning royalty. "You'd like to see him, I've no doubt."

"Sir Henry?" said Tim, rather mystified.

"Yes. Oh, perhaps you hadn't heard that my partner had been made a K.B.E.? Dear me, Major, you've been so long away! Yes, yes. He went in for politics during the war, and was for some time Controller of Xylonite. He did splendid work—splendid. He's becoming very prominent indeed; my only regret is that we see so little of him nowadays, with so many calls upon his time. Will you have the kindness to wait?"

Tim was about to assure Mr. Isherwood that he wouldn't cross the road to look at a bushel of Knights of the British Empire, but the little man's obvious sincerity

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stopped him. He waited therefore, and in due course followed Mr. Isherwood, who ushered him with the air of a Lord Chamberlain into the familiar room with the crested mantelpiece where he had first seen Mr. Haythornthwaite. He found that gentleman a little fatter, and a little more like a theatrical producer; and though no doubt able to look the whole world in the face in theory, still unable to do it in practice. The year 1920 was the Flotation Year, when the papers contained almost more announcements of fresh ventures than news; Sir Henry Haythornthwaite was skillfully surf-riding on this flood-tide, and his name adorned boards of directors without counting, besides being the crowning glory of that mighty undertaking, The Nereid Shipping and Transport Company, which had been founded during the war, and had paid fabulous dividends ever since its inception. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that his share of the legal business which his firm transacted was now confined to matters of the first importance only. "How do you do, Major Staveley?" he said graciously. "Let me see, it must be five years since we met."

"Very nearly."

"I must congratulate you on your promotion, and on your decorations," continued Sir Henry, eyeing Tim's tunic. "I see you have the Croix de Guerre. My son has that too; he was also on the Staff."

"Was he indeed?" said Tim.

"Yes. He did very well in the war," replied Sir Henry, with proper paternal pride. "He was awarded the D.S.O., and quite a number of foreign decorations."

"He was in Egypt, wasn't he?"

"At first. After a while the climate began to tell on him, and he was fortunate enough to get a post at the War Office. He was an A.P.M. for a time."

"I have to congratulate you too, I believe," said Tim. "Though I'm rather late in the day, I'm afraid."

Sir Henry bowed slightly and lowered his eyelids. "Why, the man's as vain as a peacock!" said Tim to

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himself, wondering at this ingenuous streak in a man, who, by all accounts, was shrewd and cool-headed beyond the average. "Thank you! Thank you!" went on the magnate. "I expect Mr. Isherwood has talked over your affairs with you? We don't anticipate any difficulty with your—er—matrimonial complication. You took us very much by surprise over that."

Tim flushed. "I expect so," he agreed shortly.

Sir Henry fidgeted with his papers, and pressed a button; Tim gathered that the audience was over, and made his *adieux*. While he was interviewing Mr. Cridge the cashier—who seemed to have as low an opinion of Tim as ever, and to think that the best men in the war had all been killed—he saw the great man bustle out to his Rolls Royce, surrounded by a bodyguard of clerks, secretaries, and fine old crusted commissionaires, on the way to some important meeting. Even here there was a faintly buskined air to the whole business, and one almost expected the passers-by in Chancery Lane to cheer, like the villagers in Act One when the Squire comes on.

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During the next week or so Viola watched her *fiancé*-to-be like a lynx, and what she saw did not reassure her. If he could have returned home a year before, from Batoum, his condition would have been bad enough; and another twelve months of strain and shocking sights had been super-imposed on that. Tim was given to fits of terrible depression, to irritability at nothing, to the nervous smoking of innumerable cigarettes, the lighting of which betrayed his shaking hand, and he admitted to sleeplessness and violent recurring nightmares. For some time he refused petulantly to have anything to do with doctors. "I've had my spleen felt scores of times," he said. "They can't do anything for malaria; they tried everything at Salonica, and never did any good." But Viola had had just sufficient experience to know that there was more in his case than malaria, and she insisted until he gave in before her feminine persistence. When his next attack

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was upon him he consented to call in a local doctor, who passed him on to a very great man indeed. Viola went with Tim to Harley Street, and the specialist asked to see her alone for a moment or two after he had dismissed his patient.

"Miss Fanshawe?" he remarked, peering at her myopically over his spectacles. "Quite! Quite! I have heard all about you, of course—all about everything in fact. A most extraordinary and tragic story! We doctors are used to patients who have had shattering experiences in these days—dear me, yes!—but I never came across a more accentuated case in every respect than your—er—*fiancé*. I was very interested, very. In fact, I kept Lord—well, you would be surprised if you knew whom I have kept waiting, so that I could hear it all. Dear me, it's a romance. But very uncomfortable, all the same. Yes, yes."

He smiled benevolently. "Now this is what you must do, my dear," he went on, becoming suddenly purposeful, the real personality overcoming a slight oddity of manner. "We know what's the matter with him, of course; he's been holding down the rags of his nerves by sheer willpower for years, like most men of imagination who have been doing that sort of work. Well, marry him as soon as may be. Don't delay. Then take him off to the country—Lake District, South Coast, anywhere you like—and get some flesh on his bones; he's forty-two pounds under weight, at least. You can come up to town for a little amusement now and then, but not too much of that, for it's in the nature of a stimulant. Keep him healthily occupied, but don't try to avoid talking about the war—encourage him to talk, let him talk his head off, until he's got it out of his mind. And when he gets these fits of depression—I'll speak plainly, my dear young lady, for I can see that you'll understand me—make love to him; yes, exactly, make love to him. A woman can make a man forget anything, for a time at any rate. The malaria will get less as he gets better; you and nature must do the rest."

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"I understand," said Viola, meeting his eyes squarely.

"Good! I'm glad you came with him; it will be a great help to him not to be alone while this trouble is on him. Good-by!" Viola left the old gentleman smiling benignly, and joined Tim in the waiting-room, where in a distant corner a familiar gray-mustached face above a Field-Marshal's uniform made her stare. "I say," said Tim, as they came down the steps, "do you think *he* needs patching up too?"

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Staveley v. Staveley and Postlethorpe (of Postlethorpe's Pure Preserves) was duly completed, in a manner satisfactory to all parties, especially the lawyers; and then followed for Tim a harder battle than any he had seen on active service. While the war, and the aftermath of war, had occupied him day by day, he had contrived to carry on, by heavy drawings on his nervous capital and disregarding the morrow to the best of his ability; but now the reaction set in, and he was harried and chased by the demons of his own brain. It was as if he had been circling round a whirlpool, growing gradually nearer the vortex of destruction, but still floating on a smoothly continuous course; and now the vortex had suddenly flattened out, leaving him tossing and turning this way and that, flung helplessly about by the choppy waters of its subsidence.

Time after time, in the early days of their marriage, Viola woke to find him gasping and sweating in the dark beside her from some appalling nightmare, and felt the heart pounding in his chest as she soothed his horrors away from him. At intervals malaria racked him, and there were times when the battle seemed a hopeless one—when depression gripped him until he thought of suicide as a man thinks of a small indulgence to which he is strongly tempted; and it was then that Viola's presence brought him through by its healthy strength and sanity. There were spells when some particular specter haunted him for days—the ghost of Kurt, for instance; some mountain tarn would perhaps touch his memory, and he would

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see with stereoscopic vividness the kindly images of his lost past—the General in the shade with his pipe; Mr. Staveley's humorous face, and Uncle Max toweling his burly back; Kurt's flawless strokes cleaving the ripples; himself and Fritz, boys again, teasing old Nerón (he could fancy he heard the old dog's whimper). And always through these beloved memories he saw the face of Kurt, firm and brave and kind beneath a Balmoral cap, as he had seen it last. . . .

At other times, demons, plain demons, assailed him, and he and Viola tramped miles through leafy lanes and over moorlands to throw them off, while he poured out such a catalogue of hardships and horrors seen in Macedonian trenches and Russian towns as took the color out of her cheeks; but she listened and said nothing, for it brought him peace to talk. And thus they fought out the battle together all through the long summer, in cheerful sunlight and amidst green fields, on sea beaches, and on the moors of Devon.

Other young soldiers, suffering from similar intangible complaints to a greater or lesser degree and not blessed with economic freedom, did strange and sometimes terrible things in that period of reaction, and older people, set in the groove of more tranquil times, blamed it variously on the deterioration of the race, the cinema, and the policy of Mr. Lloyd George. . . .

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The attacks of the enemy had lost their fury, they had suffered reverses and lost heart, and only a few survivors still lurked in remote caverns, as it were, when in late September Mr. and Mrs. Staveley sat upon the deck of a small yacht on the Bure near Wroxham Broad, comfortably fishing for perch. Tim, sunburnt and much filled out, gripping a pipe-stem between clenched white teeth, looked into the Indian summer sky in contemplative mood. "It's been a blessed summer," he remarked. "By Gad! It has done me good."

Viola looked at him with satisfaction; she and nature

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had not made such a bad job of him. His hair was somewhat scanty about the temples for a young man of twenty-three, and he was still on the lean side; but his eyes had lost their hollow impatient glare, and the hand that held the rod was as steady as her own. "It's nice to see you getting better," she agreed.

His hand felt for hers. "I expect I've been a bit of a nuisance with my moods and tempers," he said contritely. "In fact, I know I have. I'm sorry, old thing."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Viola. "As if it mattered! You poor darling! How ill and run-down you were."

"Well, I certainly couldn't have posed for any statue of Health, Strength, and Beauty. But that's over now. Even my malaria's nothing like as bad as it was—though I shan't get over that in a hurry. However, I'm not the only one. Ah! Isn't that my float bobbing? Aha! Now then!— Damn! Got away again. Don't look; I'm going to impale a gentle."

Viola, who had confronted Bolsheviks with a stiff upper lip, could not face the baiting of hooks with fat maggots; she turned her head away.

"I'm even getting used to all these blasted civilians," went on her husband reflectively, as he stooped over his grisly task. "Do you know, at first the order and comfort of everything here, although it was what we'd been fighting for and all that—instead of being pleased to see it so untouched, it positively annoyed me. Stupid, of course; but it is a fatted capon of a place, isn't it, Viola?"

"Certainly there are a lot of people who don't know there's been a war. Look at the Aunties—"

"Exactly. But they're old ladies, and I don't mind— All these workmen, and shopkeepers, and business people in their natty villas. By Gad! I've seen just such people, not a scrap different, starving and shot in batches. So've you, I expect. And these people are as dead certain as ever that nothing can possibly happen to *them*—not a bit thankful for what they've been spared."

"How should they know, poor people?"

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"Oh, of course, they can't imagine it. It does seem impossible here. All the same, it did annoy me— How odd it was not to see limbers and G.S. wagons about the roads, and not a man with a rifle. And even now I can't help feeling that all this will come to an end somehow, like a glorified leave, and I shall have to go back to the Doiran front. Funny that seems to have stuck to me more than Russia. I was caught young, I suppose. Well, no doubt I'll get over it—"

He lapsed into contemplative silence, his eye on the soothing green of the flags and sedges of the river's brink. A wherry, laden with the new owners of the land, the foreman-mechanic type, passed noisily to the accompaniment of concertinas and popping corks, while the gentlemen of the party played poker with savage concentration in the middle of the deck. "That's the gang we've been fighting for," said Tim a little bitterly.

"I tell you what's the next thing, Viola," he went on after a pause. "As we've got to settle down now—" one glance at his wife would have told any other woman why that was "—I shall have to find some sort of occupation."

Viola looked at the unconscious Tim with a feeling of triumph. This was a great advance; hitherto he had shown no sign of losing the soldier's day-to-day attitude. "What have you a fancy for, Tim?" she asked.

"I haven't an idea— You see, as far as any knowledge of that sort goes, I'm still seventeen. Men of my age have found their ambitions in the ordinary way, and know what they want to be—cabinet ministers or chiropodists, or whatever it may be. But I haven't the foggiest notion of what anything means. What do civil servants do, and how do you become one? What do bank clerks, or ship captains, or school-masters do, and how do they begin? I know what soldiers do, and I don't want any more of that, God knows! Of course, there are my languages; but speaking languages isn't a career, except for a hall porter or an ambassador. I rather thought of

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going in seriously for painting. We haven't got to consider the financial end of it—"

"Well, why not?"

"Nothing. Only I'd like to do something with my brains, if you understand what I mean. However, no doubt something will develop— Half-past five! We'd better be getting back to Wroxham. There's no wind, and I shall have to quant all the way."

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## CHAPTER XXVI

## *EASY GO*

HOWEVER, the difficulty of choosing an acceptable life-work, which is such a perplexity to people with ample money and all the time there is, was to be spared Tim. Circumstances contrived very soon to transfer the matter from the abstract plane of the soul to the prosaic level of the stomach, which, as all those in the category previously mentioned know very well, is much less exacting.

"Here's your friend Sir Henry Haythornthwaite," remarked Viola, as they sat alone in a first class carriage speeding up to London from Wroxham. "He seems to have been getting into mischief."

"Oh, yes?" replied Tim, deep in *Blackwood's Magazine*. "What's he been up to?"

Viola doubled back the sheet of the paper. "'Where is Sir Henry Haythornthwaite?'" she quoted. "'Violent scenes at shareholders' meeting. Crisis in affairs of large shipping company.'"

Tim looked up. "What's it about?" he asked, with awakening interest.

Viola went on. "'An Extraordinary General Meeting of shareholders of the Nereid Shipping and Transport Company was held at the firm's offices in Moorgate, E.C., at 3 p.m. yesterday afternoon (for full report, see page two). The acting chairman, General Sir Watford Tatton, made startling disclosures which fully explained the sensational fall in the price of the shares on the Stock Market last week. Nereid Ordinaries, which opened on Monday week at 87/6, were quoted nominally yesterday at 6/- without finding buyers.' Have you got any, Tim?"

"I— Well, I don't quite know what I've got," admitted Tim. "I haven't been into all that with the solicitors



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yet; they're holding everything on my behalf. I wonder if— What else does it say?"

"You read it," said Viola, passing him the paper. "I have to shout so against the noise of the train."

He took the folded sheet, and following her forefinger read on: "Angry and hostile comment was provoked by the continued absence of the Chairman, Sir Henry Haythornthwaite, and the General Manager, Mr. Arthur Hicks, neither of whom attended the meeting. The Acting Chairman admitted the Board's ignorance of the present whereabouts of the two gentlemen, but emphasized their entire confidence in the Chairman, who, they insisted, was sure to come forward immediately. Efforts made by the office of this paper to get in touch with Sir Henry Haythornthwaite at his country house and his town address elicited the information that he has not been heard from by his family since Wednesday of last week." Tim ejaculated to himself. "According to the statement made by the Acting Chairman, the last balance sheet supplied to the shareholders contained serious irregularities, the full extent of which is not yet known. The meeting passed a vote of lack of confidence in the present board, and elected a committee from among their number to watch their interests. The Public Prosecutor was represented at the meeting, and further sensational developments are expected from hour to hour."

"This looks rather rotten, Viola," said Tim. He turned over to the financial page, and read the report of the meeting from beginning to end. The thinly-veiled hints of fraud and calamity were ominous, and gave him an unpleasant feeling in the pit of his stomach. "Well!" he remarked at length, meeting Viola's eyes with uneasiness in his own. "It looks as if he's done a bunk. I wonder— But of course Haythornthwaite and Isherwood isn't just Haythornthwaite himself. They're a firm, and it can't make any difference to us, even if one of the partners has skipped off."

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"Your money's all in their hands?" asked Viola, who knew very little about the mysteries of investment.

"Yes. They've always had it," replied Tim, who knew just about as much. "Ever since my father died. I suppose I ought to have made them settle up, but I haven't bothered since I came home. I just drew what I wanted, and put off the rest. I wish now I— But it's bound to be all right."

"Oh, sure to be. They're well-known people, aren't they?"

"Leading people in their line. All the same, I think— When I've dropped you at the hotel, I'll just run on into the City and find out what it's all about."

As he got out of the train on the Underground posters confronted him from the bookstall. "CITY MAGNATE STILL MISSING," said the *Daily Mail* boldly. "NEREID COLLAPSE. RUMORED SPREAD OF CONSEQUENCES," said the more cautious *Morning Post,* not yet quite convinced that Sir Henry might not still turn out to be a Pillar of Society. Not much encouraged by these, Tim hurried up Chancery Lane; at the door of the office were policemen, hard put to it to keep out a crowd of curious people, and Tim would not have succeeded in entering had it not been for his old friend Mr. Cridge, who recognized him and convoyed him past the portal.

Consternation and confusion reigned within the office; the door of Sir Henry's private room stood open, and Tim caught a glimpse of official-looking persons taking notes, and opening and shutting drawers. He questioned Mr. Cridge, but that gentleman was his usual impassive self and quite uncommunicative; in the end he succeeded in obtaining a few words with a distraught Mr. Isherwood. "It is quite impossible to tell you anything at present, Major Staveley," said the latter. "We are quite overwhelmed. Sir Henry has not yet come back, but he is sure to return at any moment. I do not know what can be amiss, but it is impossible that his conduct— In any case

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the affairs of the firm's clients can hardly be in question."

And with this cold comfort Tim had to withdraw.

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It was not many hours before it became apparent that the affairs of Sir Henry's clients were just as much involved as those of the business associates of the levanting financier. The whole world now knows how the fugitive was arrested in Stockholm, brought home to stand his trial at the Old Bailey for fraud and embezzlement, and sent to penal servitude. He would have been accompanied in the dock by his associate in crime, the defaulting General Manager, had not that unfortunate thrown himself overboard from the Channel boat.

Sir Henry's downfall had been brought about by the crisis which had settled like a nipping frost upon the unhealthy hot-house luxuriance of post-war commerce towards the end of 1920. All over the world the price of raw materials had rushed over the peak, and was tumbling headlong down the declivity on the other side. Merchants had hardly time to abandon the take-it-or-leave-it attitude of a few short months back before it became impossible to find any one to take it at all. The Nereid Shipping Company was touched by this from its own particular angle; at the instance of its Chairman it had entered into a large contract for new steamers at the very top of boom prices, and the fall in freights made its insolvency inevitable. This was bad enough, but there was worse to come. For several years Sir Henry Haythornthwaite had had the company very much in his pocket, and abetted by the Manager he had done just as he liked with its funds; there were many transactions which would look ugly if they were to come to light, as they must necessarily do if the business were to be wound up. Sir Henry's fear of appearing badly, his confidence in his own judgment and the blindness of his vanity, all the things which influence Napoleons great and small, combined to upset him here. He proceeded, with the utter callousness of the cornered gambler, to bolster up the decaying fortunes of the Com-

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pany with every resource he could lay hands on by any means at all, hoping that some turn of chance would enable him to straighten things out again. But there were no strokes of good luck for anybody in the great slump of 1920; at last there was nothing ahead but exposure, and he made a bolt for it, leaving behind him the ruin of hundreds of people, Tim included. For a very little research showed that Sir Henry had turned the firm of solicitors, that old-established by-word for integrity, inside out. "Why in the world didn't I see this coming?" said Tim bitterly to his wife. "I *knew* that this fellow was a bad egg the moment I saw him. Macleod even mentioned it, now I come to look back. I've deliberately blinded myself to it. I wonder why I didn't take my money off him as soon as I got back? I never believed in him really."

"There must be plenty of people who are wondering that now," replied Viola.

When Tim attended the trial, and saw Sir Henry as brazen and shifty in the dock as ever he had been in Chancery Lane, he did some more wondering, with the kind assistance of the public and press; for there is no matter in which everybody is so wise after the event as in a financial smash. Every man marvels at the gullibility of his fellows—until he rushes to chase the sparks of some new rocket, without pausing to think of the stick and the stink.

In that crowded court, Tim heard Mr. Isherwood, grown quite old and broken in a few weeks, give an exposition of the ruined affairs of his firm. He heard the cross examination of the directors of the Nereid Company, mostly amiable old retired admirals and generals, who, as it now appeared, scarcely understood the difference between debit and credit; and he grew heartily sick of the plaintive bleats of these gentlemen, and of everybody else who had any responsibility in the matter, to the effect that they had had implicit confidence in Sir Henry, in spite of the fact that in their small way they had been every bit as bad as he.

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There came a day when these things dragged themselves out to the bitter end, and Tim came wearily back to the hotel where they were living from a meeting of creditors at his late solicitors'. Viola looked up from the sewing of diminutive oddments, and read the truth in his face.

"Well, Tim?" she remarked. "Bust?"

Her husband sat down heavily before the fire. "High as a kite," he replied.

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It was one thing to say it, and even to know it, but it took a little grasping; for they were still living just as they had lived since their marriage, and there was money in the bank—luckily Tim had drawn a large amount from the vanished firm only recently—and the sole difference was that when that came to an end it would not be possible to drop a letter in the nearest pillar-box and have the store mysteriously replenished. "I have two moods," said Tim. "In one I can't believe that anything has happened, and feel quite rich; in the other, I feel as if we'd have to go to the workhouse to-morrow. And neither of 'em meets the case."

"How do we stand?" asked Viola.

"Well, I've got nearly a thousand pounds in ready cash —fortunately I'd left my war gratuity just where it lay in Cox's, and forgot all about it, and I opened another account with the London Joint City and Midland when that check came from Haythornthwaite's to Windermere, you remember? One thing about it—if I was slack, I was comprehensively slack; otherwise I should have closed that account at Cox's like a tidy man, and we'd have been so much poorer— You've got your little bit, and we don't owe anybody anything, and we've plenty of new clothes. So we needn't call upon good old Macleod, bless his heart!" (For Mr. Macleod had much cheered Tim in the forlorn days of the Haythornthwaite *débâcle* by writing from Madrid, where he was now the proprietor of an English school, offering assistance if it should be required. "If you have been hit by the recent smash, which I fear

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may have been the case, do not hesitate to call upon me," wrote the kindly Scot. "When I came home from Chile I put my savings, on the advice of a bank-manager friend in Alloa, into thread shares, and they have gone up in the most amazing way. The school is prospering famously too, though it has only been started a year, so that I can well afford it." Tim had been happy to be able to write that he was comfortable enough for the moment.)

"No, indeed. Lots of people would call that riches," said Viola.

"Perhaps. But not if they'd just lost forty thousand pounds. To think of poor old Grandad's money going with the rest— However! It's costing us a pound a day each to live here, so something's got to be done."

"We must look round for a little house."

"And I must look round for a job in an office or something."

Thus Tim, quite light-heartedly. For like clergymen, schoolmasters, and other disassociated persons he had a childlike belief in the rich and easy rewards of commerce. Such business men as he had encountered had always appeared very ordinary people, and they seemed to thrive prodigiously. Surely a person of good abilities ought readily to find a niche in such a *milieu?* But Tim and Viola were a singularly solitary couple. Tim's circumstances we know; Viola had her three maiden aunts, and an uncle on the mother's side who was a country rector in Lincolnshire; none of these could influence a job for Tim, and he very soon found that without some such instrument the business oyster was a difficult mollusc to open. To begin with, the times were inauspicious, for the commercial slump was acute; and in the second place, the heads of firms had become utterly sick of the job-hunting ex-officer. There was nothing to blame for this except human nature—the eternal difference of view-point between generation and generation, widened by the upheavals of the last few years into a gulf which only time could bring back to its normal span.

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The war had been a triumph of the modern sort, in which the victorious soldiers marched in chains alike with the vanquished. Soon after the armistice the labor market became full of sullen and slightly unbalanced warriors, who were only too willing to convert their swords into something, but not at all sure what they wanted that something to be. The private was better off, in a way, than the officer; for while the rank-and-file of war could only become the rank-and-file of peace, an officer who had been used to leadership and responsibility could not immediately be put into a similar position in civil life. The ex-officer's fate, as a rule, was the office; and these young men, who had been torn up by the roots twice already—into the army and out again—made application for employment in a commercial house very much as a medieval soldier might have asked for a seat in a galley. They had to do it, so they did it, as they had done things they loathed before; but even the lucky ones who found lodgment quickly could not help thinking that office routine was inconceivably petty, the whole thing extremely purposeless—for most businesses are of no importance whatever except to the owner—and the wages beggarly. Very often they showed their feelings, and were slack and inattentive in a way that made their seniors shake their heads. They thought bitterly that the country might have made a more generous gesture than to set men who had been through all that they had suffered to licking stamps under old duffers for a pitiful salary—though as to what the country could have done they had nothing constructive to suggest. In short, many of them behaved like young idiots, no doubt; but not, on the whole, unnaturally.

As for their employers, they too acted in strict accordance with habit and environment. They were, as a rule, hard-working elderly men who were used to the idea of monotonous work strictly regulated by economics of a rather ignoble sort. They saw no reason whatever for paying a young man who was of no more use to them than an office boy a fabulous salary just because he had been a

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major, and had won the Military Cross. The war had not influenced the mentality of the older people in England in any radical degree, and most business men could not see why a returned subaltern should not put on civilian clothes and at once become an industrious apprentice, with an account in the Post Office Savings Bank. Some of them had soldier sons at home with precisely the same exasperating flighty restlessness about them, and this made the parents even more impatient with the tendencies of the young men in their employ. Others had lost sons in the war, and were sometimes sympathetic though without understanding; for it never occurred to the vast majority of civilians that the processes of war should have influenced others besides those whom it actually struck down, any more than that an isolated motor accident should upset the *morale* of motorists as a class. And even the most kind-hearted of employers became "sick and tired of having these young chaps come into your office to ask for a job, and looking at you all the time as if they thought you were an Old Fool."

In fact, it was a time of friction. The young men from the wars did not behave very wisely, very often; and the old men at home did not act very generously as a rule, and contrived to forget the essential fact that lay behind all criticism of either party—to wit, that if it had not been for these young men there would not have been any businesses. . . .

. . . . . .

Into this unsympathetic atmosphere went Tim, born and brought up amongst people who had had nothing to do with commerce, in search of a living wage. He did not find one, and he did not enjoy the search. He was snubbed by office boys, stared at by the clerks whom he had always previously taken for granted as features of the landscape, like railway porters or hotel servants, and treated in an off-hand manner by everybody. A year before he had been in Russian towns, an object of respect to mayors and civic authorities, and treated with confidence by generals,

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so that perhaps his ideas were a little inflated; certainly the devils which still lurked in the recesses of his mind made many sorties at this period, and he felt sometimes savage, and sometimes depressed and a little afraid. He occasionally wondered gruesomely, with his eyes on Viola's unconscious profile, what was going to become of them—the three of them—if something did not turn up. Viola, her mind occupied with an ordeal to come greater than economic perplexities, never seemed to think of it. . . .

Tim was better qualified than many on this pilgrimage, because of his languages, but he soon found that foreign correspondents do not derive much pecuniary benefit from their gift of tongues. There is an old tradition in British business circles, dying hard, that if foreigners want to do business with them they should damn well learn their language, and many concerns regarded a foreign correspondent as an affectation. Tim received two or three offers which seemed to his inexperienced mind so small as to make it almost cheaper to stay away, and also had opportunities of taking his wife to a number of uncongenial and frequently unhealthful foreign places at a salary which he could not possibly believe to be adequate, even for a single man—and in this he was right; for in business, as a very great business man has stated, the price of a commodity is what it will fetch, and there were plenty of Tim's particular brand at the moment; how their representatives were to exist under foreign skies did not concern the principals, when there were so many who were ready to go and manage somehow.

The only possible line of entry into commercial circles for Tim lay in his Filsley relatives, and this was an avenue that plain decency would not allow him to take—not, he mused bitterly, that a real business man would have allowed himself to be put out by a little thing like that; but having ignored his Uncle Tom, except for a perfunctory letter or so, in the time of his prosperity, he balked at turning to him now. Uncle Tom, however, was quite unconscious of having been disowned; and in fact, he had

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constantly utilized Tim to swell the bulk of his war sacrifices, as a nephew whom he had "given," after the fashion of the middle-aged and complacent in those days, when any of their younger relatives, who would neither have gone nor stayed at their bidding, elected to go. Now, all unsolicited, he made Tim an offer. "I hear from Mr. Isherwood (who ought to be ashamed of himself, in my opinion)," wrote Uncle Tom, "that you have lost your money in the H. affair. You are not much of a hand at writing, and I can see that you take after your father in business matters—he never would ask for nor take advice—and I don't expect life in the army, with its loose ways, has made you any better, for I cannot understand why you didn't take over control of your money long ago, instead of idling your time since you came home. However, you didn't, so there's no use crying over spilt milk.

"Now I expect you will be looking out for something to do, and if you like to come to Filsley I don't mind giving you a chance at the works. Of course, you'll understand that you'll have to start at the bottom like your cousin Jack did, and work hard to make up for the time you've wasted, and not expect too much salary at first. We are in a bigger line of business now than ever we were, though things are a little down just now, but when things are settled on the Continent we shall go on expanding." (The easy money of munitions had gone to Uncle Tom's head a little, and he was inclined to give credit to himself where credit was due to circumstances; and he had at that date, like many small industrialists, no idea whatever of what world conditions were, and what his business was to have to combat in the next decade.) "We shall be interested to see what Viola's like. Your Cousin Katie is getting married very soon to one of the Danks boys, who did very well in the war, in the Ministry of Munitions. Jack is over in America at present, on business and also for a change, which he needed very much after the war. You

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couldn't imagine what it was like in the munition business —the worry and strain of it.

"Let me know when you can come up, so that we can go into things. . . ."

As Tim skimmed through this letter, scarcely noticing the details and thinking entirely of his wife and their coming needs, his first reaction was a feeling of relief; here was a job, waiting for him. But at a second reading misgivings seized him. He remembered the grimy little provincial town, Uncle Tom, the chapel, the rubbish heaps, and all the rest of it; he had told Viola about his visit, and he knew what she would make of such a place. Uncle Tom had seemed bad enough then, but the idea of being dependent upon him—and in no uncertain way, as the decided hint of the iron hand in his letter showed; of Viola living the life of a poor relation under the patronage of Auntie May and Cousin Kate; of himself consorting daily with—nay, under the orders of—Cousin Jack; of—well, of the whole thing. . . . No! Ten times better work for a stranger in any capacity. Oddly enough, a memory came back to Tim of a Christmas Day long ago, when his father had looked at a child's bungled sketch, and had said: "You'll catch the sunlight on the Bell in the end, if you try hard enough; but only if you try hard enough, never forget that, Tim." He had not forgotten; and would he find the sunlight of life in Filsley, under the thumb of Uncle Tom? Decidedly, no. "Selling my birthright for a mess of pottage," he remarked to himself, although he knew that the phrase scarcely fitted a man whose birthright had already been embezzled.

So he wrote politely back to Uncle Tom, without even consulting Viola, thanking him for the offer, but adding that as he had never had any commercial experience he would not like to get it at the expense of a relative, but preferred to look round until he could find out what he was fitted for.

"Well!" said Uncle Tom, reading this reply beneath

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the ancestral portraits and the linseed-oleaginous landscape, "you can please yourself, lad! I've made ye th' offer." The ladies of the family tossed their heads in high displeasure, for they had been chiefly interested in their new relative by marriage, whom they suspected of being "South of England," and of Having Airs; and they had derived much anticipatory feminine pleasure from the thought of taking the same out of her. . . .

. . . . . .

One thing at least Tim achieved in his explorations of the City. He found a home.

It will be remembered that Viola had pointed out the necessity of looking for a little house, and this they did without delay; but of course, in the early days of 1921, you might as well have looked for the Holy Grail and had done with it. There were no little houses. For a week or so Tim was harassed by the idea of the hotel, ravaging his bank account like a domestic boll weevil, and then they thought of rooms, and saw all sorts of rooms and every variety of landlady, with the one common feature of undesirability. They were almost getting to the stage of taking the next lot in despair, whatever they might be like, when the problem was solved fortuitously.

Tim went one day to call upon a firm of merchants, and sitting at the entrance, in a sort of combination telephone booth and sentry box, he found an old friend, one Sergeant-Major Humphries, whom he had last seen in a shell hole above Doiran Road Camp, with a nasty shrapnel wound in the leg. This warrior, whose rugged features looked out unfamiliarly from above a commissionaire's blue, was prevailed upon without much difficulty to adjourn to a neighboring hostelry, in the private bar of which the couple conversed of mutual friends, and so came at last to themselves and the present. As one old soldier to another, Tim told the sergeant-major something of his recent troubles, and received the latter's condolences, together with much condemnation of civilians and their

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wicked ways. "Taking them one with another, they're no better than a lot of A.S.C. quarter-blokes," averred the sergeant-major in his warrant officer's voice, which, like that of butlers and clergymen, is a professional characteristic quite uninfluenced by locality or race. "Times are precious bad for us all, sir. Of course, I've my pension; but what's a pension, when all's said and done, with Bass at eightpence and an aeroplane—" by this he meant a bottle of whisky—"fifteen bob, and a wife into the bargain?"

"Lucky for you you've your medal allowances, Sergeant-major," said Tim.

"The M.S.M. was a bit of luck, sir, and that's a fact. And I'm not forgetting that I got you to thank for it, sir, you and Captain Meadows. A good officer that. Killed, wasn't he, sir?"

Tim nodded assent.

"Ah! I heard as much, down at the base. Well, as I was saying, sir, when I got home I got this job, but I soon saw that my pay here, and pension and what not, wasn't going to go very far in these times. And I didn't fancy my wife going charing. . . . However, luckily for me I'd always been a saving sort, and I had a bit put by. So I looked round, and now I've got another iron in the fire." The sergeant-major drained his mug with satisfaction, and genteelly sucked the drops from his mustache.

"What did you do?" asked Tim.

"Well, the missus had been living with a sister, sir, and of course that wouldn't do, not with me home; and houses are the devil to get nowadays, small ones anyway. So I got a big villa, sir, down Maida Vale way; it's a bit off the track, and people in that part don't want such a big house, so I got it dirt cheap. Lodgings, you see, sir. The wife's a good manager—has time for it, poor girl, since the kid died (we never had but the one) in Malta, just after the Boer War, and we do pretty well. Of course, there's a crab to it, like everything else, and that's striking hard

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cases. I've just had to chase a married couple this morning. Posh-looking as you please, but pay! Not on your life, sir."

This touched so closely on Tim's own immediate problem that it seemed a coincidence not to be ignored. "Do you know, Sergeant-major," he remarked, "I happen to be looking for somewhere to live? There's my wife and myself— Do you think you could fix us up?"

"I could indeed, sir," replied the sergeant-major, much pleased. "Only thing is, I don't know whether the place is good enough for an officer like you, sir. But p'raps you could run down and have a *dekko* at it? If you come, I'm sure the wife and myself would be very glad indeed, sir."

Tim duly went down that afternoon and had a *dekko* at it, and it was so obviously just what they needed that he closed with the sergeant-major's wife at once, rather to Viola's dismay when he went back and said so; but one look at Mrs. Humphries reassured her. The house was a fair-sized one, their rooms large and comfortably furnished, and owing to the particular circumstances of the situation there was none of that atmosphere of thinly-veiled hostility which usually pervades lodgings. They felt at home there; Mrs. Humphries was possessed of an abundance of thwarted motherliness, and entered so heartily in to the matter of the coming event that she made Tim feel like a bigamist at times. The sergeant-major insisted on acting as batman, and the sound of his clicking heels was like music to the ears of Tim; in the house at least he was still a field officer, and not the dirt that he appeared to be considered in the City. "Well, we've struck lucky over this, at any rate," said Tim, with a sigh of content.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### *THE FINDING OF THE SQUARE HOLE*

TIM had written to Mr. Macleod, as the latter had requested him to do, to tell him how he was getting on, and he had to confess that he was not so far getting on very fast. In due course Mr. Macleod replied with a suggestion, which formed the subject of a council of war. "It's no use, you know, Viola," Tim remarked morosely. "I didn't realize it before, but my value in the world is a maximum of four pounds a week, as far as I can see. I've interviewed every bald-headed old ass in the City of London, I should think, and that's what it amounts to. Of course, my personal idea is that most of the business geniuses I've come across couldn't work an automatic slot-machine without getting the drawer stuck; I was talking to one to-day—reminded me of my old governess, Miss Pilbeam, exactly—been trading with Chile for fifty years, and couldn't speak Spanish, and thought the people there wore beads and feathers. But of course that doesn't help *me*."

"But surely— People in business do have wives and families, don't they?"

"Yes. But not when they're twenty-three—that's the catch. As a matter of fact, I'd been seriously thinking that the best thing might be to swallow my objection to it, and go out to Chile on spec. I don't know that young Englishmen get paid any more there than elsewhere, but my local knowledge might come in, and Uncle Max or the Admiral would find me something quick enough. But I don't much want to turn up there like a bad penny, if you understand what I mean, not to mention that business of my cousin that I've told you about—really an awful show that— Besides, I don't want to go so far from



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England, do you? It was all very well for us in the old days in Chile, because we formed a circle of our own; but we wouldn't find it much fun there by ourselves, without much money—especially you, with a youngster to look after. It's a fine country, but the sanitation *is* bad— No, if we've got to go abroad, let's go to Macleod. If he thinks I can teach language in his school, and I think I can, if it comes to that—"

"But I don't want to go abroad, even to Madrid," expostulated Viola. "I've done enough travel to last me for some time—and the sanitation's just as bad everywhere outside England. I want to stay here, and bring up my baby decently, like other Englishwomen. Let some one else keep the flag flying at the outposts; we've done enough, you and I."

Tim stared into the fire. "You know, Viola, I thought I'd learnt something about the meaning of life, and the things that mattered, in the war and so on," he remarked. "Well, I hadn't tumbled to the most important of all—this money business. Why, it's the very backbone of life! However— The thing is, if we don't go to Macleod in Madrid, what can we do? Commerce is a washout. I had some sort of vague idea of doing something with my sketching, but you remember what the chap in the picture shop said? If trained artists, who've been for years in the schools, can't make a living out of it, and it seems they can't nowadays, what chance have I? I can't etch, and I haven't handled oils for years. I might do something with commercial work, if I got put in the way of it, but there again— All I've got is a trick of catching a likeness in black-and-white, and there's no money in that."

"Except on the beach at sixpence a time."

"Exactly. No, this language teaching seems to be the only thing that has turned up that I'm qualified for."

"Well," said his wife, with the simplicity of genius, "but if you can teach languages in Madrid, why can't you teach them in London?"

"Who's to give me a job here, at any sort of screw?" asked Tim ironically.

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"Why should anybody? Why shouldn't you just give lessons? Privately, or in small classes? Then we could stay here—and—"

Tim stared at her as the idea took shape in his mind. "By Gad, Viola," he cried, "I believe you've hit it!"

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Tim had at first a quite logical doubt as to whether, since nobody appeared to be willing to pay much to the possessor of several languages, anybody would be willing to pay to learn them; but this proved to be unfounded, though the soundness of his reasoning was in some measure supported by the curious fact that those who wished to acquire such learning seemed to be almost invariably of the type which finds it impossible to cope with any new idiom. Tim sometimes thought, as he wrestled with obtuse but earnest lady typists, and clerks whose minds seemed as set and rigid as the rulings of a ledger, that England must have received a double dose of the Curse of Babel, but he countered this by reasoning that those who had a gift for philology probably needed lessons no more than he did.

It had been easy to fix a scale of terms; he simply paid a visit to a well-known school of languages and enquired what they charged, fixing his own prices considerably lower. The house at Maida Vale possessed a small back room on the ground floor, inconvenient from the point of view of ordinary letting, which the sergeant-major was glad enough to rent as a work room for a nominal sum, and a set of text-books and dictionaries provided the necessary equipment. At first, in spite of advertisements, pupils came in slowly, and Tim was dispirited; but one brought another, and in a couple of months he had often to turn clients away from sheer lack of time to take them, which was not remarkable when it is considered that he could undertake tuition in French, German, Spanish, Greek, Russian, Serbian, and Bulgarian. He was also familiar with a number of dialects which were not in demand by pupils, but which, as his reputation spread, sometimes brought him in a little translation work.

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The drawings on his capital dwindled, and in a surprisingly short space of time he found that he was actually standing on his own legs, and keeping himself and his wife, which did his soul a very great deal of good. It was a fact, of course, that his present occupation was not likely to make him a millionaire, and would perhaps, as his needs grew, be inadequate to provide the essentials of his scale of living; but a crisis was now pushed from adjacency to the other side of the horizon, and this satisfied him well enough for the present. Anything might turn up before that arrived; his translation work brought him into touch with all sorts of people, and then there was his drawing.

One wet morning, when a pupil cut his appointment, he had filled in the time by beginning a black-and-white drawing to illustrate a funny remark he had heard in the Tube, and in the end he had sent the completed sketch—without any particular hopes, for he argued from his City experiences that such a leading periodical was likely to be brusque with outsiders—to *Punch*. To his surprise he received it back again with a complimentary note to the effect that if he would alter it in this and that respect it might do. It did do, and was printed and paid for; and Tim felt that indescribable craftsman's thrill when he saw it in print, and realized that in the four corners of the earth men would see this work of his—done here, on the dining-table in Maida Vale. Thereupon he thought that his future was made, and did three more drawings in quick succession—only to have them turned down, politely and with a word or two of valuable criticism—for in the literary profession, unlike most others, the bigger the bug the better the manners. This sobered him and dispelled his rosy dreams, but he did thereafter manage to place about one effect in ten with some illustrated weekly or other; and though he regarded it as nothing more than a hobby, who knew to what it might not lead in the end?

For the rest, he and Viola were very comfortable and contented. Both of them by taste and upbringing were

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used to self-sufficiency in matters social; they had no gregarious tendencies, and felt no desire to attach themselves to a circle, which was fortunate, for most English people could do better without adequate clothing than their social niche. Viola had spent all her life going from one foreign town to another, and was not used to making permanent friendships; Tim, though ever on the alert for amusing casual company, was not the sort of man who found formal society congenial. All that they asked was for their intelligences to be stimulated and amused, and there is no place in the world where that can be done so easily or so cheaply as in London. Somewhere or other in its vast immensity it caters for your every mood—almost free of charge if you choose to look around you—and the changes in its endless streets and shops are beyond the possibility of capture, so that there is always something new to see.

Most of Tim's pupils came in the afternoon or evening, and his working hours, though long, could be manipulated to allow for occasional spells of freedom. On these days the two of them toured London as a year before they had toured England, and in spite of the difference in the weight of their pockets they derived almost as much pleasure from the one as the other. They did all the things that Londoners never dream of doing; how many people, for instance, who have lived in London all their lives, know where the scale model of the battle of Waterloo is, or that there is a permanent collection of waxworks in Westminster Abbey? They went journeys by 'bus, into districts unknown to one another as Africa and America, and gathered types and backgrounds for Tim's sketches; they prowled endlessly about antique shops, having acquired a passion for the ancient after lives spent in dwellings where such things were not—for neither the house in the Calle Hospital nor Viola's many temporary residences had contained much in the way of souvenirs of the past. Sometimes—as for instance when Tim sold a drawing, or there was an anniversary of some sort—they dined

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out in Soho, where Tim's facile tongue secured them service which would not have been given to dukes from nostalgic foreign proprietors and waiters, and went on to theaters, which they found to be just as good or bad when seen from the family circle as from a more expensive point of view. They found that some of London's parks can be, if you choose your time, places of remote pastoral peace, besides being convenient for the Underground. "Surprising what a lot there is to see," Tim remarked on one occasion. "What shall we look at to-day—a few million pounds' worth of pictures, or what? They're all ours —we're paupers, aren't we?"

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Once they had a peculiar encounter on their rambles. They were at an exhibition of somebody's pictures—a method of improving the mind which Tim seldom missed, though Viola was less enthusiastic when the Art was Modern, as it was on this occasion, and consisted of painting subjects anyhow but as they looked, and in very bilious and unpleasant shades. Viola at that time was subject to violent and sudden prejudices against her surroundings, and she took one now: so her husband left her on a comfortable settee in the first room, looking at a piece of statuary—which did not belong to the exhibition, but had been executed by some benighted Victorian who thought a woman's leg was round instead of square—while he went off to exercise his critical faculties within. On this settee Viola was presently joined by a young, handsome, and beautifully dressed lady, and both of them saw, with the eagle glance of womanhood, that the other was in similar case to herself. "Thank heavens!" said the newcomer, in a friendly fashion, sitting down with a sigh of relief. "Art for Art's sake, perhaps, but for us it's Feet for Feet's sake, isn't it? It's so tiring standing about."

"It isn't so much that, in my case," replied Viola. "But all these horrible purples and yellows and greens—"

The lady nodded her pretty golden head comprehend-

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ingly. "I see. Gets you that way, does it?" They lapsed into symptoms, and conversed interestingly for a while. A rather sensible woman, Viola thought; most people in England were so stupid about such things.

"I said I'd wait for my husband," observed Viola's new friend at length, after looking several times towards the staircase. "He was going to call for me at four. It's past that now. I hope he hasn't— Oh, no, here he is."

"And here," said Viola, observing Tim through the archway of the central gallery, "is mine."

The two gentlemen approached from opposite directions, and of a sudden Viola became aware of a look of amazement on her husband's face, and a start of astonishment at her side. Tim came up to them, and held out his hand. "Hello, Maudie!" he said. (Afterwards he remarked to his wife: "I suppose I should have scowled and ground my teeth. But what's the use? I didn't feel like that, whatever I ought to have felt like.")

"Hello, Tim!" replied the other with the utmost coolness. "Well, fancy now! Is this your wife? We've been making friends. And this—" she turned to her own spouse, a large bovine gentleman of forty-fivish, who was carefully groomed to look thirtyish "—is my husband, Sir Samuel Postlethorpe. Sam, this is Mrs. Staveley, and Major Staveley, of whom—" her eye twinkled mischievously "—you have heard so much."

Of the quartette Sir Samuel was the only one who was at all embarrassed; Tim found himself diverted and quite pleased to see Maudie again, Viola was naturally interested to see a person who, a bare year before, had been in her shoes, and Maudie was as cool as cucumber. Sir Samuel looked uncommonly foolish, and shook Tim's hand sheepishly. "Well, this is curious," went on Maudie, as she and Viola took frank stock of one another. "You certainly are a picker, Tim. Isn't he, Mrs. Staveley? And only twenty-three, too, aren't you, Tim?"

"That's right. I haven't seen you since 1918, Maudie," said Tim. "Why didn't you turn up at the court?"

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"Oh, we thought we'd leave it decently alone. Didn't we, Sam?"

Sir Samuel—a rich tomato pink—murmured something inaudible. "Now don't be an idiot, Sam," continued his wife. "Major Staveley doesn't bear any ill-will, do you, Tim? Besides, he and Mrs. Staveley are going to have tea with us, if they will, and there's a tea-room attached to this Chamber of Horrors."

And so, amazingly, they did.

. . . . . .

"Tim," said Viola, as they returned to Maida Vale, "do you know, I quite *liked* that woman? Superficially of course—I don't suppose I would if I tried to get to know her. When you told me about her I thought she must be horrible—going about with stray subalterns. But there's something alert, and—what's the word—vibrant about her. She's quite charming."

"Oh, Lord, yes!" agreed Tim. "She can be fascinating. Don't I know it? When I first found out what she was, I was heart-broken over her. I thought she was a monster. But—you know—one gets more tolerant, I suppose, with a little knocking about. If we'd been the children of a laboring man, brought up in a back street, and feeling we were fit for something better and determined to have it . . . One might be a bit hard. I had a bit of a talk with her while you were fascinating the jam-boiler; she's sown her wild oats, so she says, and she's settling down to family life—she's got him to buy a peerage, just as I prophesied. It'll be in the next Birthday Honors. She may be telling the truth—seems quite fond of the chap, though I don't think she's got much capacity for affection. Only sensation, you know, and very clear notions of what she wants, look how she dropped me and my forty thousand for that fellow and his half million. . . ."

"Why, Tim, I believe your vanity is touched."

"Don't be silly. You know it was just what I wanted her to do; and as for the money she cost me, I'd just as soon, on the whole, that she had it instead of that blighter Haythornthwaite. . . . Well! She's an immoral woman,

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of course, but I don't think she knows what morals are—and lots of the real aristocracy aren't any better, without her excuse or her brains. . . . But I must say it did seem queer, seeing you two sitting side by side."

"Shut up!" said Viola. "You horrible old Turk!"

. . . . . .

Tim discovered, somewhat to his surprise, that he possessed a real gift for the teaching of languages, and an instinctive knowledge of the pitfalls which any particular language presents to the brain which has only used English; and having begun his work with distaste, he was surprised to find his long-buried capacity for furious interest in an academic subject come to light as vigorous as ever, so that he thought and talked incessantly about the problems of his new calling until he began to bore his wife—though, of course, she would never have admitted it. And when a man bores his wife with shop, he has found work that is peculiarly his; ask the wife of any leader of any profession whether this is not so.

"The chief trouble in teaching languages," said Tim, in an interval between lessons, "is the difficulty in obtaining decent books. All the systems are hopelessly pedantic. You can't possibly learn to read or write a language by using verbal logarithm tables—lists of irregularities, and so on. You can teach 'em more French from a copy of *La Vi Parisienne* than out of any French grammar—they don't have to force themselves to try to understand. What one wants is text-books that are a bit more human, if you understand what I mean."

"You ought to fix up a system of your own," observed Viola, and sowed the seed of a thought. Of course, manlike, he always believed in after years, when *Staveley's Colloquial Language Primers* came out one by one, that the idea had been a heaven-born inspiration of his own.

. . . . . .

"We didn't think, a year ago, that we'd be doing this sort of thing, did we?" observed Tim, going into his

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bedroom one summer evening, after the last of his pupils had left.

Viola was brushing her hair at the mirror, and looked round over one attractive bare shoulder. "No. It's all been very rapid," she replied.

"It seems amazing sometimes. And yet I don't know whether in a way it hasn't done me good. Stopped me brooding over things. Of course, that holiday last year was the cure; but all the same. . . . And as far as I'm concerned, I'm just as well pleased—now that things are turning out all right—that I didn't get a job in an office. There may be more money in business in the end, but I'd rather know I was doing something useful."

"Well, but isn't business useful?"

"Oh, yes, of course—in theory. But in practice most businesses are less concerned with getting anything done than with stopping competitors getting things done, when you come to think of it."

"The trouble with you, Tim," said Viola, "is that you wouldn't do for business. You'd never do any good with it."

"Why not?" asked Tim, affronted. "Do you mean to say that I'm not as capable as—"

"Oh, no—you're probably more capable. But you're the specialist type, born and bred, you know. If somebody gave you something to sell, your chief concern would be whether it was the exact thing for the customer's purposes, and what would be the best way of doing whatever he wanted to do. Now wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," admitted her husband.

"Well then, you old silly. You'd be a lot of use as a salesman, wouldn't you?"

"There may be something in that," agreed Tim. "But it only confirms what I say. Most business people are engaged in mere money-grubbing, and not very intelligently at that."

"Of course they are. So are we. So's everybody. And as for intelligence, most people haven't very much. If we

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had had, we wouldn't have spoiled a perfectly good world with a silly war, and half beggared ourselves doing it. The trouble with you, old boy, is that you're like all clever people—your head's just a bit in the clouds. If you went in for some rough-and-tumble job, you wouldn't do any good—you haven't the low cunning."

"I managed all right in the army," said Tim, not entirely flattered.

"No doubt infantry officers didn't go in much for low cunning. Or the ones that had it wouldn't remain in the front line for long."

"You're right enough there," admitted Tim with a chuckle. "Well, perhaps you've hit the nail on the head. I've always felt there was something lacking about me. I've never wanted to watch football matches, nor bet on horses, nor get myself knocked about playing violent games—it seems both silly and dangerous to me; and when I used to like to explore No-Man's-Land—it had a kind of fascination for me—and work up little stunts with machine-guns and bomb-traps, it seemed both silly and dangerous to everybody else. Well, I'm in the minority, so I'm a freak, I suppose. . . ."

"You know," Tim went on after a pause, "I suppose if I weren't a freak I'd take that Haythornthwaite business more seriously. But somehow I can't; perhaps you're right, and I've no practical money sense. But it appears to me, after all I've seen in the last few years, that to come through this period with one's life, and one's bread-and-butter, and a bit of reserve cash, is a dashed sight more than a few million other people have managed to do. And some of them seemed a good deal richer and more secure than I was, a few years back. . . . Oh, well! It's a crazy business, anyhow. But we're happy, and that's all that matters, isn't it?"

"That's all that matters," agreed Viola.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *THE END OF THE CHAIN*

THE Staveley Memorial in Regent's Park, which had been projected before the war and had suffered indefinite postponement, like a host of other more important things, was unveiled in June, and Viola went with Tim to the ceremony; although her confinement was due in under a month, she had been so extremely well throughout that she did so as a matter of course. Tim, on his part, had grown used to Viola's condition, and had come to adopt a sort of automatic unthinking solicitude towards her; he knew, of course, that this state of things was to come to an end in time, but it was not going to do so to-morrow, and there was no need to think of it nor to worry about the dangers of its termination—not that the risk moved either of them in the slightest. After all that they had been used to in the last few years they were not likely to be disturbed by so ordinary a thing as childbirth, with all the resources of medical science ready to hand. Or so they thought.

It was no particular shock to Tim, therefore, when Viola, getting up from her armchair to go to bed at a quarter to eleven on the day of the Regent's Park ceremony, suddenly bit her lower lip with a sharp intake of breath and leaned against the table. "What's up?" asked Tim, as he asked a hundred times before during this period of symptoms. Viola continued to lean against the table and to stare at nothing. "Don't know," she replied. "Just a—sort of—I'd better get into bed, anyhow. I wonder if it's beginning?"

"What's that?" said Tim, now surprised. "It can't be—"

"Wait a minute," commanded Viola, and hurried out of



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the room. Tim heard her cross the landing and go into the bedroom; he remained sitting in his chair, half incredulous and half annoyed. Surely Viola couldn't be right? It was three weeks too soon. But what an infernal nuisance if she was—why, they hadn't got the nurse in, and probably Viola hadn't got things half prepared. It was providential that the people in the downstairs front and back, the rooms that he was taking for the increased needs of his augmented family, had moved out that very day. It would have been the very devil to have had the child born with strangers in the house; he had always pointed out the possibility of that, advocating a nursing home, but Viola hadn't fancied it, and Mrs. Humphries wouldn't hear of it. However, a miss was as good as a mile, even if— But probably there was nothing in it.

"Tim!" came a call from the room across the landing.

He strode hastily over. Viola was lying in bed, looking perturbed. "I feel perfectly well," she remarked. "And yet— If what I've read is correct, what's happened shouldn't have happened for another three weeks. I ought to see the doctor, Tim."

She looked entirely normal, lying there in the light of the rose-tinted electric lamp at the bedside; Tim felt an increasing conviction that the whole thing must be a false alarm. He did not know much about childbirth, but all his ideas were opposed to this indefiniteness. He could not imagine there being any doubt about it when it did commence. "Now?" he said. "Or shall we leave it till morning? If you feel all right— But whatever you think, of course. I don't know anything about it."

"I do feel so extraordinarily well," observed Viola, again torn by doubts. "I hope it isn't—the nurse not here, and the things not all ready. I tell you what, Tim—run up and get Mrs. Humphries. She'll know about such things."

Tim went obediently up the dark stairs to the higher regions inhabited by the sergeant-major and his wife, and after shouting his mission through the keyhole, con-

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fronted that lady, a grim spectacle in curl-papers and a faded flannelette dressing-gown. "I'll be down right away, sir," she remarked, becoming at once alert and businesslike. Tim descended again to his wife, and sat helplessly on the edge of the bed until Mrs. Humphries, wreathed in reassuring smiles, appeared on the threshold. Then he wandered across to the sitting-room, where he remained with his ear cocked to the feminine chatter behind the closed bedroom door. "My dearie, of *course* it is," he heard Mrs. Humphries' full tones. "Don't I know? Now don't you worrit yourself about the nurse not being here—" The voice became indistinguishable; chatter about baby-linen, no doubt. Trust women to chatter when there was something to be decided! Tim prowled up and down the room, mildly exasperated at not being able to take command of the situation. Why couldn't they say what they wanted doing, and be done with it?

The bedroom door opened and Mrs. Humphries appeared, her kindly face screwed up in portentous winks and nods. "Better ring up for Dr. Swanston, sir," she remarked.

"You're sure?" said Tim. "It's three weeks too soon. What about the nurse? We ought to get her here too."

"Oh, I'm sure enough, sir. I've had three, though two of 'em was still-born. There's symptoms. And—yes, we'd better send for the young woman, if the doctor wants her." Mrs. Humphries sniffed; she disapproved of "trained" nurses.

There was a sound of ration boots on the staircase, and the sergeant-major appeared, fully dressed and apparently freshly shaved. He came in and stood to attention. "Anything I can do, sir?" he enquired.

Tim considered. "No," he replied. "You'd better carry on here, to attend to whatever wants arranging. I expect the cot will want rigging up—lucky we've got it. I'll ring up the doctor and the nurse."

He put his head in at the bedroom door, and said:

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"How goes it?" Viola looked up. "Beginning to hurt a bit," she replied. "But it's it, all right. I'm glad. I was afraid of something. . . ." All Tim's indecision had vanished. "All right," he said briskly. "I'm just going to get hold of the doctor. Won't be long."

He went down the stairs, and attacked the telephone in the hall. The exchange was slow; he studied the blank wall, the advertisement memorandum card for telephone numbers on which a jumble of meaningless scribbles were written, the hat-stand, and a still life of bleeding fish and fruit, and listened to the Humphries' bumping about upstairs, for what seemed an endless period. At last a voice. "Hullo!" he called, his attitude stiffening with a jerk. "Is that Dr. Swanston's? I want to speak to the doctor, please."

"Oo is that, please?" said a sleepy feminine voice, which belonged in fact to the doctor's housemaid, wakened from her slumbers.

"This is Major Staveley. Is the doctor in?"

"No, 'e's out—leastways, 'e's not at a case, 'e's out at the theater," replied the voice. "Is it urgent? Because 'e won't be in until after the theater, and Dr. Roberts will look after anything immedjut, I was to say."

Tim, however, was not listening. He looked at his watch—eleven twenty-three. This infernal doctor would be home from his unseemly revels before long (Tim felt irritably that doctors ought to be prevented by law from going to theaters). "Just give the doctor a message, will you, when he comes in? Tell him to come round and see Mrs. Staveley at once. Understand?"

"Won't Dr. Roberts do?"

"No, he won't!" rasped Major Staveley savagely. (He was beginning to get a little rattled; childbirth, when it arrived, was not quite the smooth-running thing that it had seemed in anticipation. Supposing the doctor turned up late?) "And if you don't deliver that message, I'll come round and pull your back hair for you. See?"

"All right, sir," replied an awe-stricken voice.

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"Now for that nurse!" said Tim to himself, hanging up the receiver.

He turned to the thumbed telephone guide and found her number. This time he waited longer than ever, and the goddess of the wires at length proclaimed, in the saccharine trill which was just becoming a substitute for efficiency in the telephone service: "Nu replay! So sorray!" Tim called her an unconventional hussy in Spanish and implored: "Can't you do *anything?* It's a nurse, and she's wanted on a case." The goddess suddenly became human, and remarked: "It's no use. You can hear the bell ringing if you listen; there can't be anybody in the house." Tim listened, and could hear the monotonous *brrr!—brrr! —brrr!* of the bell. "Anyone else I can call?" asked the operator. "I'll give you a number," said Tim, and looked up a cab rank. He ordered a taxi, and went upstairs again. "How's it going?" he asked through the bedroom door.

"A bit better now. Rather painful a few minutes ago."

He waited on the doorstep impatiently, and jumped into the cab without waiting for it to draw up, shouting the address to the chauffeur as he slammed the door. He hoped that infernal doctor would hurry. This affair had caught them all napping. How long did it take for the business to be over? He didn't know much about such things; however, Mrs. Humphries did. She'd had experience. . . . Capable woman, Mrs. Humphries. One good thing, anyway.

The house of the nurse was dark, and he interviewed a shadowy female, who thrust a head from an upper window, in response to thunderous knocking. "Nurse Jenks is away looking after a case," said this lady. "No, she won't be leaving her patient for another ten days. No, I don't know what you'd better do, I'm sure. I'm sorry I took so long answering; I've got toothache and my face is bound up, so I didn't hear at first. . . ."

Tim cut short her maunderings, thanked her audibly, cursed her mentally, and plunged back into the cab, now frankly worried. "Better go and see if that doctor's back

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yet," he thought, and gave the driver the new address. "Another blasted woman there. . . ."

He met Dr. Swanston at his front door, arriving with his wife in festal array. "Hullo, Major!" remarked the doctor cheerfully. "Come in! Nothing wrong, I hope? Mary, this is Major Staveley. Major, my wife."

"Damn your wife!" thought Tim, as he acknowledged the introduction. The doctor led the way into the dark hall, and switched on the light. "We've been to see George Robey," he prattled airily. "Absolutely top-hole show. Come in here, Major, will you?"

Tim followed him into his consulting room. The doctor, a pleasant-faced young man of thirty-odd, sat down at his desk, and consulted a pad beside the telephone. "I see you've rung up. Oh, your wife, of course. Let me see, though. . . ." He consulted a desk diary. "That's a little early. Hum! Sure it's not a false alarm?"

"Mrs. Humphries says not."

"Oh, well," said the doctor with patent boredom, "I'd better go round I suppose."

"That nurse—I haven't been able to get hold of her," said Tim. "She's with another case. What had we better do about that?"

"That's a nuisance." The doctor rubbed an ear thoughtfully, and then turned to the telephone. "I'll ring up another." After the inevitable wait that accompanies nocturnal calls, he spoke briskly into the instrument, hung up the receiver, and turned to Tim. "That's all right. She's got rather a long way to come, and she's got to get ready, but she'll be here as soon as she can."

"I'll go and get her, if it'll help," suggested Tim, wanting to do something. "I've got a taxi at the door. But perhaps I'd better leave that for you?"

"Oh, go by all means. Not the least hurry for me," replied the doctor unconcernedly. "I've got to change and get some things together, and then I'll walk; it's only a step. It'll be an all-night job—first child, y'know—that

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is, if it isn't a false alarm altogether. It's *rather* sooner than I expected."

"Does that mean—? The child will be all right, born prematurely like that?" said Tim anxiously, as he strode to the door.

"Oh, Lord, yes. Three weeks either way is nothing," replied the doctor, accompanying Tim down the hall. "Tum-titi-tum-tee! Tum-tum! Tum-tum! Catchy tune that; can't get it out of my head."

. . . . . .

It was nearly one o'clock when Tim got back to the house with the nurse. He opened the door with his latch-key in a fury of impatience, wondering whether the doctor had come yet. Just like him if he hadn't—callous brute! Catchy tunes, indeed! Made one feel like ticking him off; but one couldn't do that, of course. He led the way upstairs, and met the doctor, cool and smiling, at the head of them. A great relief suffused him. Good old doctor! What stout-hearted cheery chaps these medical fellows were!

"Ah, there you are, Nurse!" said the doctor. "Glad you were able to come. Our patient has taken us a *leetle* by surprise. Yes, yes, Major, everything's going as well as possible. No, you'd better not go in—I'll let you know how things are going. Now, Nurse—" They opened the door and closed it behind them, leaving Tim stranded on the mat, feeling lonely. He wanted very much to ask Viola how she was. He listened awhile, irresolute. No sound except the doctor and the nurse talking. Mrs. Humphries came up the stairs with a tray, smiled at him reassuringly, and passed inside. "She fancies a cup of tea," she remarked as she did so. Well, she couldn't be so bad if she wanted to drink tea. He wandered into the sitting-room, firmly shut the door, and sat down.

The windows were open—it was a warm June night—and the noises of the great city, sleeping and tossing endlessly in its sleep, came in on the slight breeze—a distant belated taxi, a train somewhere a long way off, the heavy

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tread of solitary passers-by. Curiously intimate and yet impersonal, the footsteps and breathing of those invisible wayfarers, passing under the windows close below, sharing with him these still small hours, and yet gone in a moment—companions of twenty seconds, whom one would never encounter again. Well, that was how you went through life—meeting people and drifting away again. A cold thought struck him. Was Viola, perhaps, going to drift away too—to become a memory, like so many things that were now jumbling in his tired excited head? He forgot this momentary quaking in thinking of times past—so many things, intimate or poignant or terrible, but all vanished like smoke—the clutching fingers of the looter of corpses on the morning after the earthquake; the familiar patterns of the shawl he had liked best of his grandmother's store, a scarlet and black *manton de Manilla* with the small *flecha* which meant that it was a lady's shawl and not a dancing girl's, and the same design on both sides; the German admiral's overwrought face; M'Fee face downwards over the shell hole, bleeding his life away; Macleod's crisp Scots voice reading Latin hexameters; the Secret Service man in his blue French uniform at the *Roi Georges;* the cinder parade ground of Moorhen Camp, hot in the summer afternoon sun, striking up through the boots; little Short cross-legged on his bed, snickering over his broad jests; Saunders in the wire of Pip Four; Denikin's stricken face on the retreat from Orel; Sir Henry Haythornthwaite in the dock; the General, his grandfather's, wise old face. If he shut his eyes he could almost imagine that the General was in the room with him, and hear his well-known voice, telling of heroic deeds in bygone wars—those wars that had been a background for heroism and not one endless tedium of blood and machinery; telling of Denmark and Austria and Alsace-Lorraine; telling— Somewhere a clock struck two; he sat up, shuddering. He had nodded.

This was like trench duty in the line, he mused, when you sometimes found yourself at one end of your sector

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and couldn't remember how you had got there—sleeping as you walked along, and yet stopping to speak to the men and looking over the top all the time. But never had he commanded a sector with the lurking anxiety he now felt, powerless to do anything except wait. He wandered about the room and looked at things absently, though he could hear a bitten-off cry from the other room, opened the door to listen, and shut it again. No good doing that; nothing he could do. Must try to keep one's mind off it. He kept his mind religiously off it for two whole minutes, and then went back to the door. Of course, it might not have been a cry he heard; it might have been anything. . . . Why didn't the doctor do something? What were doctors for? He hadn't gone, had he, without saying anything?

He strained his ears on the dark landing, and was at once most horribly answered. A high wavering shriek rang out in the other room, and subsided to a *diminuendo* of pitiful moans. "That's splendid, Mrs. Staveley. Coming on beautifully," said the doctor's voice. Tim's frozen blood relaxed in indignation. What did he mean—splendid? She sounded as if she were dying; and he—he could not do anything, could only stand here helplessly. Something cold ran down his nose, and he discovered that he was perspiring furiously. Why—he hadn't thought about it much, any more than one thought of an arm or leg, but that was part of him in there—part of his life, his being. Supposing she died? Surely they did not let people die in childbirth nowadays? But some of these doctors. . . . All the drunken and eccentric medicos whom he had encountered in the army and in South America mowed at him from the dark flight of stairs to the third floor. Suppose this fellow were no good? He ought to have enquired. Oughtn't they to have another opinion even now? There was Viola beginning again! Should he knock, and ask? Should he— The door opened, and the doctor stood upon the mat, looking rather grim and tired and evidently no longer thinking of George

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Robey. "Ah, I thought I heard you!" he remarked. "Look here, Major, it's not a bit of good your hanging about. Everything's going as well as possible. Go away and lie down for an hour or two."

"But, good God, man, I heard her cry out!" spluttered Tim.

"Of course you did. That's the curse of being civilized. Having a child isn't like a hen laying an egg, you know. It's a serious business." Heavy feet sounded on the staircase, and the sergeant-major, as regimental as usual, made his appearance. "Ah, I rang for you," said the doctor. "Take the Major down to the kitchen, and give him some of that cocoa."

"Very good, sir."

"Oh, don't bother about me—I'm all right," said Tim, smiling feebly.

"Clear off, man!" snapped the doctor, losing patience. "Can't you understand that it worries your wife to have you fussing about here?" He felt remorseful when he saw Tim flinch as if some one had struck him, and turn to go down the stairs without a word. "It's all right, I tell you," he called down the dark well of the staircase after them, and went back to his patient, thinking what a young father this was in these days when almost nobody married until he was over thirty.

The sergeant-major led Tim silently away from those sounds which were still coming out through the bedroom door, down to subterranean regions which he had never previously seen, where mice scuttled behind the skirting-boards and a blue flame hissed cheerfully beneath a kettle. It was very quiet in the basement, and these little noises sounded very loud and clear, as did the resonant clank of the alarm clock on the mantelpiece. Tim sat on the kitchen table, smoking cigarettes which he forgot to finish, and feeling as if he had been translated to another world; it was quite odd to see here some familiar dish or salt-cellar from the world of above-stairs, where Viola—where Viola was now— However, no use to think of

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that. But it was a damned unjust business! What had she done to suffer like that? It was worse than a dressing station; and to think that every life in the world, every baby, meant that for some one. It wasn't worth it; he'd never have another child.

"Now, sir," said the sergeant-major, having brewed a steaming jug of cocoa with plenty of condensed milk in it—sergeant-majors, owing to long association with quartermaster-sergeants, have a peculiar affinity for condensed milk, "We'll make a move, if you're agreeable, to the ground floor sitting-room. There are some armchairs there, and you can get your cocoa in comfort."

"Oh, thanks very much, Sergeant-major," replied Tim. "Let's go up by all means. But I don't want any cocoa—couldn't swallow a mouthful."

He thereupon drank two large breakfast cupfuls, in the unfamilar sitting-room which was to house the future infantile gambols of the product of this night. The sergeant-major watched Tim's head fall forward on to his chest, as the soporific drink went in warm waves through his system, and he withdrew like a cat on those ration boots which usually echoed so emphatically. "'Strewth!" he remarked to himself. "And that's the officer I saw go for a Bulgar on a patrol scrap with a walking stick! I didn't expect to see *him* with the needle."

It was a fact that during that night Tim had discovered to what an extent his neglect of the usual social outlets of mankind had focused his gregarious impulses in one particular channel—or, to put it more briefly, how much he loved his wife.

. . . . . .

He awoke to find it full day, and for a moment wondered what he was doing, fully dressed in this unfamiliar sitting-room at dawn. Then memory rushed upon him, and he jumped to his feet, stiffened and with an evil taste in his mouth, in a state of guilty panic. He pulled out his watch, to find that it had stopped at ten to four—of course, not having gone to bed, he had not wound it up.

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Good God! What had they been doing to let him sleep like this? What would Viola think, if she had been asking for him, or calling for him, and he hadn't come? A horrible thought struck him. Supposing they hadn't called him because— He raced up the stairs, with a clumsy effort to combine speed with silence. Outside the bedroom door he halted, and a sweetish, sickish perfume struck him in the face, bringing back visions of a score of regimental aid posts—chloroform! He heard Viola's voice say two or three words in a hysterical mumble, as if she were drunk; the blessed relief ran through him like a stimulating draught. Anyhow, she wasn't dead. He went into the sitting-room and sat down, his eyes on the other door across the landing.

After a wait that seemed endless the doctor came out, walking backwards and talking in undertones to the nurse. He shut the door, turned round, and his eye met Tim's. "Ah, there you are!" he said, smiling. He looked very jaded and dissipated, and the stubble showed black on his unshaven chin. "Congratulations, Major. It's a fine boy. She's doing as well as possible—had rather a hard time of it, but lots of people do with the first. Born at ten past six. Seven and a quarter pounds, and a perfect child."

"Can I go in?"

"No, not yet. Lots of things to clear up, and you must let her rest a little. The nurse'll tell you. Well, I must be off now—I'll look in again a bit later in the day. No, thanks, I won't have a whisky—I'd like one, but it would make me even sleepier than I am now."

Tim walked down to the front door with the doctor, said farewell automatically, and paused in the dark vestibule. A son! He had always known that it would be a boy; Viola had doubted, but he had not. Poor girl! She must be done up. He himself felt unutterably jaded, so what must she feel like?

He went into the sitting-room on the right of the front door, and sat down in the chair where he had spent his

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hours of uneasy slumber. He found that he did not feel particularly exultant, or particularly happy, or particularly anything now that the suspense was over. He felt numb, very tired, and yet alert. He was in that state of fatigue, of reduced vitality, which, damping down the passions and prejudices which inflame normal vision, induces the nearest approach to clear and level perception that the ill-controlled human brain can compass. He sat very still in the growing morning light, listening to the sound of London going to its daily work outside the window. Humanity was a queer business; he had always thought of it, when he thought of it at all, as senseless and chaotic, aimless and planless, finding no better task than to knock down what it had built up, like a child making sand castles. But now, in the face of that elemental fact up the stairs and the growing rumble of mankind outside, something came home to him of the wonder of it all, the greatness of the things that Man, most defenseless of all the creatures that crawl under the sun, has accomplished. He saw himself, that Ego that had filled his mind and had seemed so cavalierly treated by destiny, in true perspective. The frustration of his own plans, the idiot squandering of war, the impoverishment of this man, and the enriching of that, the wasteful pushing of little human atoms about the globe on errands as unimportant as those of ants—all, he saw now, were but the writhing and spluttering of the raw material under the hammer of human progress, in the forging and welding of a chain which was to fetter Life herself in the end, as once the cave man curbed the ancestor of the horse.

And he saw, too, in a dim inarticulate way, that he himself was off the anvil now, a part of a link in that chain, forged, tempered, and welded as well as might be—only important in so far as it might support the tension of the links that were to follow; and that the invisible fires were already hotting up and the invisible hammers poised for that new metal in the cradle upstairs. Only yesterday he, Tim Staveley, had been thinking in terms of himself

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alone, calculating for the span of his life and no further; now, scarcely three hours a father, his thoughts for the future were already bound up inextricably with the future of another—himself reborn, his son. And he would never return again to that limited vantage point which commanded no view beyond his own return to nothingness. He was part of something endless, stretching away to a horizon vague but splendid. . . .

His mind returned to practical matters. He would have to put on a spurt with that Spanish Grammar; they would need more money now—education for the boy. . . . He himself had missed Romance, he mused, that dear ambition of perfected knowledge acquired under dreaming spires; he had lost that in a muddle of disruptive and laborious experiences; but the boy— Nothing should stop him in his unimpeded march down the broad avenues of his chosen career—he, the father, would see to that.

Some one was descending the stairs: he stood up and went to the door. "You can come up now, Major Staveley," said the nurse, smiling maternally.

He followed her mechanically up the stairs and into the chamber of travail. The struggle of the dark hours might never have been; the room was neat and tranquil, and fresh flowers stood upon the dressing-table and mantelpiece. Viola turned a pale face and smiled at him with a look of pride that he had not seen her wear before; and following her glance, he saw in a cot by the window, through which the morning sun was shining cheerfully, a wisp of dark hair and a little face half hidden by the coverlet, puckered in sleep and to all appearances greatly irritated by the world and the trouble of getting into it—very much, in fact, what his own father had seen in a Valparaiso bedroom nearly four-and-twenty years before.

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